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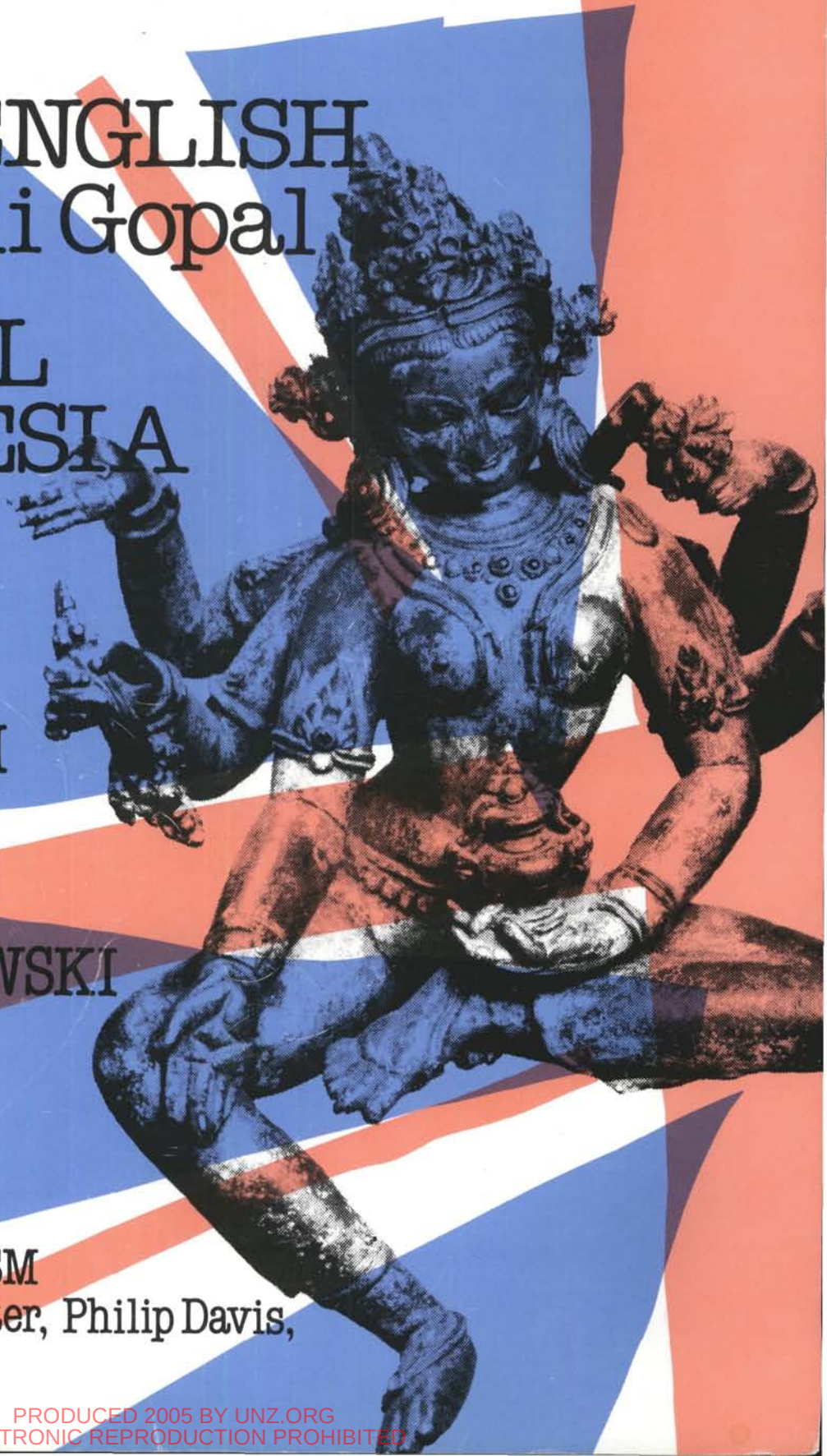

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1 EFFICIENCY
EARLY PETROL ENGINES USED OVER TWICE AS MUCH FUEL PER HORSEPOWER AS MODERN ENGINES. INCREASED EFFICIENCY CAME FROM IMPROVED ENGINE DESIGN ALLOWING HIGHER TEMPERATURES & PRESSURES INSIDE THE CYLINDERS.
2 DETONATION
BY THE 1920s, THE MORE EXTREME CONDITIONS INSIDE THE CYLINDERS WERE CAUSING SOME OF THE LESS STABLE INGREDIENTS IN THE PETROL TO DETONATE (INSTEAD OF BURNING EVENLY) AND TO DAMAGE THE ENGINES.
3 OCTANE
TO PREVENT THIS, THE OCTANE OR THE PETROL HAD TO BE RAISED. OCTANE IS ACTUALLY MEASURED BY DETONATION (OR ENGINE KNOCK) - THE HIGHER THE OCTANE OF THE PETROL, THE MORE EXTREME THE CONDITIONS CAN BE BEFORE KNOCK OCCURS.
4 LEAD
LEAD TETRAETHYL WAS FIRST ADDED TO PETROL IN THE 1920s. IT RAISES THE OCTANE BY EFFECTIVELY "MOPPING UP" SOME OF THE UNSTABLE INGREDIENTS. UNTIL THE 60s NO PETROL WAS REFINED HIGHER THAN ABOUT 92 OCTANE - THE HIGHER OCTANES WERE ALL PRODUCED BY EXTRA LEAD. IN JANUARY 86 LEVELS OF LEAD IN PETROL WERE REDUCED BY TWO-THIRDS.
5 NO LEAD
THE OTHER METHOD OF RAISING THE OCTANE IS TO REFINE OUT MORE OF THE UNSTABLE INGREDIENTS, SLIGHTLY REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF PETROL CREATED FROM EACH BARREL OF CRUDE OIL (AND HENCE INCREASING THE COST).
6 ADJUSTMENT
IN ENGINES ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR LEADED PETROL, THE EXTREME TEMPERATURES & PRESSURES IN THE CYLINDERS DO HAVE TO BE REDUCED A BIT TO COMPLETELY ELIMINATE 'KNOCKING' WITH UNLEADED PETROL. THIS ADJUSTMENT (RETARDING THE IGNITION) IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED TO CONVERT MOST CARS TO UNLEADED PETROL.
ALTHOUGH THE ADJUSTMENT IN THEORY REDUCES THE ENGINE'S EFFICIENCY BY 1-2 PERCENT, IN PRACTICE IT DOES NOT NOTICEABLY IMPAIR PERFORMANCE
7 EXHAUST GASES
A BIG ADVANTAGE OF UNLEADED PETROL IS THAT IT ALLOWS 'CATALYTIC CONVERTERS' TO BE FITTED TO REMOVE OTHER EXHAUST GASES. (THE CATALYSTS WOULD OTHERWISE BE NEUTRALISED BY THE LEAD.)
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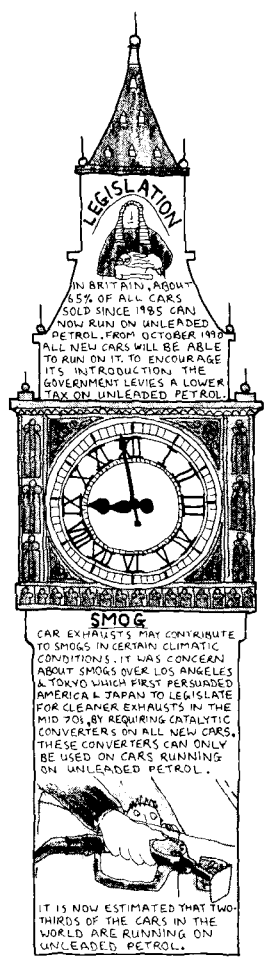
Unleaded
Will life go more smoothly with unleaded petrol?


LEGISLATION
IN BRITAIN, ABOUT 65% OF ALL CARS SOLD SINCE 1985 CAN NOW RUN ON UNLEADED PETROL. FROM OCTOBER 1992 ALL NEW CARS WILL BE ABLE TO RUN ON IT. TO ENCOURAGE ITS INTRODUCTION, THE GOVERNMENT LEVIES A LOWER TAX ON UNLEADED PETROL.
SMOG
CAR EXHAUSTS MAY CONTRIBUTE TO SMOGS IN CERTAIN CLIMATIC CONDITIONS. IT WAS CONCERN ABOUT SMOGS OVER LOS ANGELES & TOKYO WHICH FIRST PERSUADED AMERICA & JAPAN TO LEGISLATE FOR CLEANER EXHAUSTS IN THE MID 70s, BY REQUIRING CATALYTIC CONVERTERS ON ALL NEW CARS. THESE CONVERTERS CAN ONLY BE USED ON CARS RUNNING ON UNLEADED PETROL.
IT IS NOW ESTIMATED THAT TWO-THIRDS OF THE CARS IN THE WORLD ARE RUNNING ON UNLEADED PETROL.

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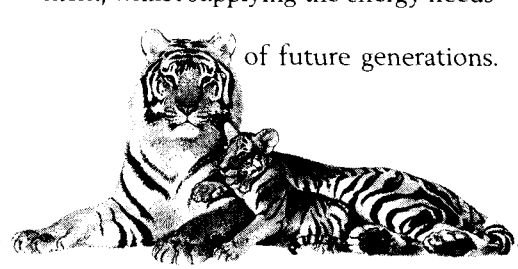

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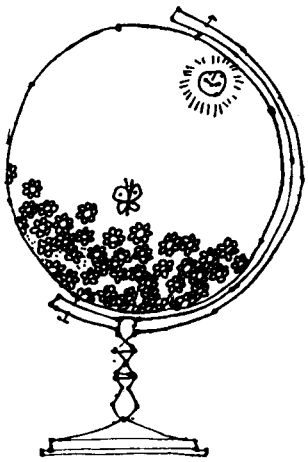
George Walden

Peaceful Co-Amnesia

Alternative Routes to Oblivion



EVER SINCE my school days I have been trying to disprove a maddeningly sententious line by the 17th-century French writer, Boileau: *"Ce qui se conçoit clairement s'énonce aisément* (Whatever is clearly conceived is easily expressed)".

I am not sure, however, that I am going to manage to do so in this text. For I want to juxtapose two themes: the moral bankruptcy of the East, demonstrated by the disintegration of Communism; and the moral instability of the West, reflected in its educational values.

East and West are no longer on a collision course. They are no longer "converging" either, as we were promised they would in the 1960s and '70s. Instead we face a new and troubling prospect: outright "victory". As a postgraduate student in Moscow a quarter of a century ago, I heard of a question allegedly put by a listener to Radio Armenia: "Your radio says that the West is teetering on the edge of a precipice. You also say that the Soviet Union is determined to overtake the West. So my question is . . . ." For the moment, Mikhail Gorbachov is still too far from the precipice to worry about the answer, but that is the direction he seems to want to take. We Westerners, of course, are old hands at the cliff-hanging game. We are dangling men, and watch Gorbachov's approach with suspended animation. He does not come alone: the Chinese and the East Europeans are with him. To a dangling man, one-and-a-half billion people scrabbling towards you across the arid wastes of Communism is quite a sight.

We said we wanted them to "join us"—but so many? so soon? Deserters should surely pass through the gates of the Western camp one by one, in orderly file; we need to check them for weapons, issue them with new clothing, scrutinise their motives. Such a multitude looks too much like an invasion. It is all vaguely disturbing. There is nothing like a sudden wave of converts to make you doubt your own cause.

We try to read their eyes for their intentions. Impossible: they are bloodshot with the zeal of the acolyte. We ask ourselves what brings them. Are they coming to rescue us from the brink? To trample down the crumbling edge, so that we drop off one by one? Or to precipitate us all into the crevasse by the momentum of their advance? Khrushchev threatened to "bury" us, but not under an army of converts.

Now is the moment of the West's headiest triumph. It embraces every field of human activity: economics, science, weapons technology, culture. Everywhere we have conquered quietly and (as battles go) without extreme exertion. Yet the trumpets of jubilation are curiously muted: no shouts of triumph, no thronged streets, no feasting.

What are we to say as we return unexpectedly from the ideological battlefield without so much as a wound? That our fanatical opponents simply put their hands in the air in the middle of the contest? We'll have to think of something more convincing than that. Yet it looks uncannily like surrender.

THEY ARE doing everything we asked of them. "Collective economies don't work", we told them. "Try market mechanisms." Seventy years on, they are inclined to agree. They had their own prophets, but failed to heed them. The trouble with Socialism, Nicholas Berdyayev said in the 1920s, in his *De l'inégalité,* is that it deifies the proletariat but has no respect for work. A year ago, Mr Gorbachov had

GEORGE WALDEN *has been, since 1983, Conservative Member of Parliament for Buckingham and until he resigned the post in 1987 was Minister for Higher Education. He spent twenty years in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, specialising in Russian, Chinese, and French affairs, and serving in Peking and Paris; and has undertaken post-graduate and sabbatical work at Moscow, Hong Kong, the Ecole Nationale d'Administration in Paris, and at Harvard, where he was a Fellow of the Center for International Affairs. His article is a version of a lecture delivered last autumn at the Olin Center of the University of Chicago on the theme "Decline of the West?"—Other speakers in the series of lectures were Hal Sonnenfeld and Saul Bellow.*

His book "The Shoeblack and the Sovereign: Reflections on Ethics and Foreign Policy" is published by St Martin's Press; an extract from it appeared in the March 1989 issue of ENCOUNTER.

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his own revelation: the trouble with our economy, he told his countrymen, is that you pretend to work and we pretend to pay you.

We told them that Communism was the negation of the human personality. Only *some* personalities, Gorbachov said at first; only a few thousand negations, and those were mostly mistakes. Now they are disinterring lost souls by the million. The sums are done ponderously, bureaucratically, the results emerging bit by bit, over time, like a Government reluctantly admitting a deficit. The calculation continues.

Life in the Soviet Union—or China—may improve for those remaining, and we are glad for them. But life for us will never be quite the same. We shall miss the warmth of our pity, and the consolations of indignation. The sheer distraction of the competition will be another loss. With whom to compete now? As the smoke of conflict lifts, we are able to take a clearer look at ourselves. What we see is less attractive than we supposed. By abruptly changing their ways, the Communists are clouding the mirror in which we looked for and found a reflection of our own virtue. How shall we know who we are without the defining adversary? Soon there will be no one left to thank God we are not like.

If loyal warriors are made uneasy at this unforeseen turn of events, what of the deserters, the traitors, or simply the faint-hearts and honest vacillators? We used to denounce them for collusion with the enemy. Today they deserve not our condemnation, but our sympathy. With whom to collude now? It is a bitter and unexpectedly abrupt end to a long era of illusions which perhaps go back as far as Prester John, the fabled saintly ruler of "the Three Indies", somewhere in the East, where honey, milk, peace, and justice were equally abundant. That legend held a tenacious grip on the early medieval imagination, and beyond. We ought to have learnt from experience. In the 13th century, after much questing, it was believed that Prester John had finally been identified. It turned out that there had been some confusion with Genghis Khan.

Today, the mirage of Atlantis in the East is veiled by the dust of the departing. Life for the Western liberal will be especially hard. Graham Greene can no longer expect to arouse furious indignation when he says he would rather live in Moscow than in America now that the Russians are trying to make Atlantis, USSR, more like Atlanta, Georgia, George Bernard Shaw would no longer be able to describe to a Moscow audience—as he did in the hungry 1930s—how he threw the cans of meat he had brought with him out of the train window on receipt of an assurance that there was no famine in the land.

Theodore Dreiser would be luckier. He could still claim today, with total consistency, what he said in the 1920s (*Dreiser Looks at Russia*, 1928): "Not a city, not a village or hamlet in all Russia . . . is not feeling the thrill of the new intellectual and social life emanating from the new leaders in Moscow."

In China, after the physical death of the book during the Cultural Revolution, they are publishing everything from Confucius to Updike. But Alberto Moravia will not be pressing anybody to re-issue his book on the Cultural Revolution, *The Red Book and the Great Wall* (1968) in which it is written: "For me, China today is a Utopia that has been achieved, pehaps involuntarily, perhaps by chance, it makes no difference . . . ."

The point is not that these were dishonest men. Just as we have tended to use Communist societies to improve our own image, so these writers were using them as mirrors in which to see ugly reflections of Western societies. What matters is that the approximations of Utopia they saw in these countries are now definitively off the menu, no longer available to gratify the antinomian appetites of the Western auto-critic. The effect could be salutary for both parties. The Utopians will have to seek salvation not in some idealised external world, but within the murky breasts of their fellow citizens. Those who sought proof of our righteousness in the iniquities of others will have to look to themselves too. Baudelaire wrote in his *Journaux Intimes* (trans. 1930): "There cannot be any progress—true progress, that is to say moral—except within the individual and by the individual himself." The same goes for countries.

THE BILLION-AND-A-HALF CONVERTS are approaching faster than we expected, and it is no good welcoming them to a cliff edge. We must take them into our homes; prepare a fitting reception, something to match the level of events. They will be expecting great things of us, and there are difficult decisions to be made. Maybe separate receptions for the Russians and the Chinese would be safer? We should straighten the modern pictures on the wall. They'll be intrigued by them, as we were when we first bought them. We shall weed and re-stock the bookshelves with something more in line with what they expect. (They are easily shocked.) We shall put on smarter clothes. (They're curiously formal in their habits.) We'll turn down the music so that we can talk with them—it wouldn't do to make them regret the silence of the steppe.

We'll have to send the adolescent imbecile into hiding—not what they expected in respectable, bourgeois families. Does every family have one, they'll wonder, like the weird *yurodivi* in their own villages a century ago? And we'd better arrange for the plaintive elderly to stay out of sight; our guests would be surprised to find all four of them still with us—they're used to more timely decease. Will the white wine do, or will they be wanting something stronger? They may even sniff at our under-strength Smirnoff.

The work of preparation is never done. Shall we be ready in time? And even when everything is all set, we're still uneasy as we wait for the horribly hearty knocking at the door. Will they be over-critical, over-demanding? Do they come because they really like us? For our intellectual companionship? Or only for our smarter house, our free-and-easy ways? Are they on a flying visit? (We like to think that the West *mérite le détour*.) Or have they come to stay?

We almost wish we had never invited them. Peace is trying on the nerves; you feel quite faint with anxiety. When two are locked in struggle, it helps you to keep calm, purposeful, upright. When one cedes his ground suddenly, the other falls over.

In region after region of the globe, the shadows of peace

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are lengthening. It is like an unexpectedly long, warm evening. Will it last? And peace for what? to discover the answers we must look for a moment at the reasons why half the world is lining up for mass baptism into something that sounds ominously reminiscent of our own creed. The origins of the conflict are familiar. But only if we analyse the origins of the peace shall we know how stable it will be.

The looming democratisation of totalitarian régimes is more economic and technological than moral in its motivation. In the Soviet Union and China it is not ethical revulsion at the methods of Communism that is bringing change, but their unproductiveness. It is not that the system is wrong, simply that it doesn't work. The editor of a Yugoslav Party newspaper was recently asked whether Socialism had failed. "Of course it has", he replied. "What will you replace it with?" "Anything that works—we don't mind what it's called."

The driving force behind reform is not love of freedom but the inability to continue doing what all dictatorships must do in order to survive: stop the people's mouths with bread and censorship. Socialist societies are not organised to produce the food, and are no more technically equipped than we to suppress the flow of communication. Heavy methods are not appropriate to the age. You can burn a book, but you can't take a firebrand to a silicon chip.

What we are seeing is the triumph not of ideas, but of matter. Spengler said that with the death of the founders of science, we have all become gleaners in their tradition. In science, technology, and the organisation of production, the East is gleaning the West's fields. As Alexander Pope wrote:

> *For forms of government let fools contest,*
> *Whate'er is best administered is best.*

War is no escape from the economic imperative; less because it is unthinkable (though prudence features, too) than because endless preparations for a war that can never be fought have become too expensive. Kant saw the point 200 years ago when he foresaw the burden of standing armies. In the end, he said, "The cost of peace finally becomes more oppressive than a short war." A modern war would certainly be short; that is all that could be said for it. Peace has become cost-effective.

WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING is not a moral rebirth of nations, but the triumph of the managerial ethic. So the origins of the peace are doubly tainted. In the East, not only the outcome of the reforms is uncertain, but the motivation too. And if the West has "won", it is by a technical, not a moral knockout. That is why our triumph is fully compatible with our decline.

Foreseeing that downward path, Oswald Spengler (in *Decline of the West*) promised us "a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses, the parasitical city-dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman. . . ." From Minsk to Inner Mongolia, we can expect new recruits to our wandering tribe.

Some may protest that there is a distinction between the Russians and the Chinese. Certainly there is one. Klaus Mehnert's *Peking and Moscow* (1963) is still the best synthesis. Simply put, he says that the Russians are messianic, and the Chinese materialistic. The dichotomy still works, but only just. Even now, the Russians are groping for some divine text to camouflage their westward advance. In the economy at least, they are advancing more slowly than China.

You can see it in the slogans. *Perestroika,* with its slight flavour of moving the furniture about, has less dramatic overtones than its Chinese equivalent—*gaige,* which means radical reform. (*Ge* is the same character that appears in *geming*, the Chinese word for revolution.) The Chinese dropped their communes overnight, just like that, with no justifying doctrine; the Russians cling to collectivisation. Gorbachov's problem is that his country has so far failed to respond to the managerial message: it is under-heating. The Chinese counter-revolution is over-heating; hence inflation, and the tactical retreat of recent days.

The Russians clearly still hope to produce a refashioned, modernised, exportable model of Socialism, but I suspect that the messianic element is less of a brake on progress than the cosmic inertia of the Russian people. I often wonder what would have happened to a Hong Kong inhabited by Russians. I doubt if there would have been any skyscrapers, or that we would have trembled at the territory's export potential, but there would have been an excellent émigré press, some splendid writing, and some truly fearsome intellectual feuds.

HOWEVER, these are early days. The Russians will perhaps be slower than the Chinese to join the Western dance. At first they will peer at us indolently from behind their mystic veils, but in the end they will throw them off and stomp along. Nicolai Danilevsky, a Slavophile forerunner of Spengler, saw civilisations as plants that blossom and decay; he failed to foresee the attractions of over-ripe blooms—all that mellow colour and dusty fragrance. Eventually we shall all be camping out together on the edge of the precipice, in the same ethical wilderness: Danilevsky, Spengler, Gorbachov, the leaders of China, and the prestigious academics of the West.

The ethical void is most tangible in China. Their supremely moralistic brand of Communism, coupled with a lack of any religious ground to retreat to, has left them in an ideological wasteland. On a recent visit there, I was struck by the fact that nobody wanted to talk to me about politics, theory, or doctrines—only about money. The Cultural Revolution has achieved something that revolutionaries have dreamt of for centuries: it has united students and workers, farmers and factory-hands, intellectuals and bureaucrats in a single belief: a revulsion against ideology and ideals.

In Russia, where there has been no such cataclysm to weld together opponents of the system, the tug of immobilism will linger. But the moral, spiritual, and financial bankruptcy exposed by *glasnost* will make it impossible to stagnate for long. And if they go on, there is only one direction. Even if Mr Gorbachov assumes the powers of Peter

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the Great, his imports will come from the same source as Peter's, and will eventually undermine his powers.

SPENGLER ARGUED that Western civilisation had become a mere collection of methods and instruments—that it had no soul. Danilevsky said something very similar 50 years earlier, and undertook to provide one from native Russian sources. Can Russia or China reinvigorate our ailing nomadic culture? The early signs are not encouraging.

In China, I talked to a publisher. The magnitude of what is taking place in publishing there is truly astonishing; I can think of no historical precedent. Within the space of twenty years, a billion people have been cut off from their own culture, then suddenly reconnected, not only to a domestic supply but to an external source as well. The early effects are as confusing as you would expect.

The Chinese classics have been republished, and bought in millions of copies—*The Water Margin, The Dream of the Red Chamber*—but the number of classics is limited: there is no Chinese equivalent of the 19th-century novel. Western classics are selling well, but there are signs that the market has been saturated. The real growth areas are now in popular reading—*gungfu* stories, Chinese Westerns, and imported light reading from Hong Kong. (A year ago, incidentally, they had female wrestlers in Canton. If I were running down a puritan revolution, I wouldn't start from there.)

WHAT OF RUSSIA? They tell us we must look to the fine arts for a prefiguration of the future. I spoke recently with a Russian painter—a thoughtful man, a Jew, a portraitist of dissidents, who has been tracked and trammelled for years, unable to go abroad. He told me what you might expect: having freedom thrust suddenly upon you is especially unnerving for a painter. The first thing you discover as you emerge from the underground into well-lit galleries full of the works of your contemporaries as well as your own is that dissidence is not synonymous with genius.

Suddenly too, you have access not only to the originators of the modernist tradition—Malevich, Tatlin, Kandinsky, Popova—but, as you travel abroad, to the Western inheritors of that tradition. Alongside the small, intact, and still inspiring Maleviches you can see the bloated and literally decomposing Rothkos in Harvard University —the healthy seeds alongside the suppurating fruits. For some it may be a distressing exercise: like being parted from your child at birth and meeting him when he is verging towards senility.

My Russian artist was optimistic, in the longer term. Meanwhile he foresaw three things. Firstly, a blossoming of political protest art; secondly, indiscriminate imitation of Western models; and third, a decline of technique, of craftsmanship—in that evocative Russian word: *masterstvo*. He was not yet nostalgic for the underground, merely sober about the prospects for painting in his country.

What will happen to the Russian tradition of book-reading? The advantage of having unwatchable television is already being lost. That distinctive Russian tradition of chaste writing may also fray quickly. Any day now the Soviet erotic novel will assault our numbed nerve-ends. Let me give you an advance example, lampooned in a Russian literary journal: "The acacia tree to which you were bound naked, nude, still retains the heat of your body." An incidental result of any eventual disappearance of the Russian book-reading culture would, of course, be that the West could lose one of the biggest residual market for its classics.

In music, there is no reason to speculate: the evidence that the Russians are not only not immune to pop but thirst for it eagerly is already there. Will Soviet rock and pop reveal unsuspected refinements in the genre? There are those who stand ready to claim so. World officialdom stands ready to bless the adolescent internationale at play. Recently the Soviet Embassy in London—scene of many a mournful diplomatic repast—reverberated with the sound of a Russian rock group; the diplomats are said to have enjoyed it. We may yet regret the mournful repasts. The Russians are already talking about the currency-mak- capacity of Soviet rock; it will certainly be a better dollar-earner that the export of revolution or of proletarian internationalism.

Then there is TV. To speak too seriously of television is to surrender to the evil of banality. But the powers of the Great Anarch of the small screen cannot be ignored—its powers of cultural homogenisation particularly. Satellites broadcasting pacific amnesia at us all are a more immediate and potentially more damaging prospect than "Star Wars".

When the skies open, the downpour will inundate East and West, godly and ungodly alike. Those who see this prospect as a source of peace and brotherhood among nations should remember the essentially irrational nature of the visual image. The larger and more diverse the audience, the thinner the element of rationality.

THE NOTION THAT perpetual peace can be assured either by technology or by tidier intergovernmental arrangements is an appealing fiction. That it can be assured by world youth "getting to know one another better"—by shouts of *"Yeah, Yeah"* over the ether rather than *"Niet, Niet"* over the conference table—is mere sentimentalism. The real question is what will happen when the late, limited, and suspect enlightenment of the East encounters the cumulative de-education of the West. Immanuel Kant (in *Perpetual Peace*, 1796) had something to say about this:

> "So long as states waste their forces on vain and violent self-expansion, thereby thwarting the slow efforts to improve the minds of their citizens by even withdrawing all support from them, nothing in the way of a moral order is to be expected. For such an end a long internal working of each political body towards the education of its citizens is required."

Education in what, we may ask? Thomas Mann gave the answer when he fled from another tyranny 50 years ago. In his lecture "The Coming Victory of Democracy", he insisted

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that peace and democracy would only prevail if democracy preserved a "deep and forceful recollection of itself", and if it "constantly renewed its spiritual and moral self-consciousness". These are, of course, the very qualities which have been eroded by our educational systems. That the East should be beginning its long and uncertain journey towards democracy at a time when we are losing touch with its roots is an explosive irony.

Complaints about public education go back a long time. In his *Philosophy of Right* (1821), Hegel quotes an entertaining example—a professor who, asked about the state of educational institutions in Rome in 1803, replied: *"On les tolère comme les bordels."*

Allan Bloom, in *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), depicts that mind as vacuously agape, like a barn door in a gale. I would be only too happy to be able to counterpose the British model. But the fact that a door opens and shuts with grace and ease doesn't mean that there is anything much behind it. The barn could still be empty.

Every country has its distinctive complaints about education, but the connecting strands are increasingly noticeable. That is why I was dismayed but by no means surprised to see that Professor Bloom's book received a defensive and dismissive reception in Britain. The corporate view is that his analysis is simply not relevant to British concerns: that these are purely American problems. One might as well say that *Moby Dick* is of no interest to a British audience because not only are the harpooners American, but the whale probably was too.

IF THE MAIN FAILING of the American system is a breezy materialism, ours is genteel pretence. Materialism has its advantages: by definition it is raw, flagrant—even honest. The comforting thing about materialism is that there is *something* there (even if, like Dr Johnson's stone, you have to kick it from time to time to be sure). But pretence, by definition, is a sham.

Of course, the one does not exclude the other: materialism and pretence can go together. British educational interests are currently pretending that there is nothing wrong with our educational system that money can't cure; more for teachers, more for student, more for Universities. Those impertinent enough to ask about the content tend to be told that that is a matter for "the professionals." At the very most it is admitted that more emphasis is needed on science, on technology, and on vocational training. Everything else, we are assured, is in order.

The implication is that we have done a magnificent job in the humanities. This is a consoling fiction. I know of no reason why a genteel distaste for industry and business should not go along with a genteel affectation of culture. That is the nub of the British problem—in education, as elsewhere. And as usual when you peel away pretence or affectation in Britain, you come to a core of class.

One of the main reasons for our lack of technological training is social striving. Industry is not an aristocratic pursuit. Technology is not for gentlemen—still less for ladies. These are powerful, and persuasive prejudices, and those who have the courage of their prejudices command respect. If Britain, deliberately standing out against the tides of modern history, had educated generation after generation of high-domed humanists, we might have become a poor and shabby country—but think how rich in spirit.

That is not what we have done, either in our schools or in higher education. We have been called many things, but never a race of barefoot philosophers. I see little evidence of a new generation of British giants—historians, philosophers, writers, art critics—towering effortlessly above those of other Western countries. If we do continue to produce a number of well-educated humanists in our better universities, the reasons lie in the more conservative elements in our education system.

FIRST, the highly selective system of entry into higher education; secondly, the residual benefits of class. About 50% of students at Oxford and Cambridge still come from private or privileged schools. Those very expensive schools form only 7½% of the secondary system. Unlike most state schools, they teach Classics, and also English grammar. The result is that about 90% of Classics students at Oxford University come from the fee-paying schools. Access to the past has to be bought. So much for a century of educational "progress". Standards in some of our fee-paying schools are still high, but I do not see how they can be maintained if there is not sufficient competition from the other 92½%. Nor do I see how our universities can maintain their relative quality in the longer term without drawing on the talents of a wider social group.

How did sensible, balanced, worthy people like ourselves get into this position? The answer is threefold. Firstly, the natural counterpart of the British obsession with class is dumb worship of the principle of social "fairness": hence three decades of touching devotion to educational egalitarianism. Secondly, the extreme empiricism of our philosophical temperament. We dislike theory, but we are not immune to it. Once we have got half an idea into our heads we can be more doggedly obtuse than the most perverse of ideologues. We pursue it step by lumbering step into the abyss. We reject it only when we have disproved it to destruction over a long period of time. Even ideas must be given a fair chance. Thirdly, there is our proverbial tolerance—a virtue when applied to the shortcomings of others, a lethal vice when it means indulgence towards our own.

It goes without saying that the prolonged experiment with egalitarianism in education has done irreparable damage to those it was supposed to help. But it has done something worse: it has entrenched the social advantage of the well-off, and not invariably bright. Hence in part my concern about the future of some of our universities.

Contrast the attitude of the French, who have also had their fling with egalitarianism, but know the value of ideas, and had the imagination to see that it wasn't going to work—so demonstrating again, if it were needed, that, far from being slaves to abstraction, the French are the true pragmatists. Nobody has ever met an abstracted *concierge*.

When we British get an idea, we stick with it. We've got

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another idea now—market forces. Nothing wrong with them where they belong; in the market place. But if you are not used to handling ideas, you get over-excited about them. You do not see how they balance off against each other, how you have to be discriminating in their application. Give a child a nice, bright pot of paint and it will start painting everything in sight the same colour.

When market forces are applied indiscriminately to education, utilitarianism is the result. The Benthamite approach, with all its flat-footed, earth-creeping limitations, is deep in our nature. That is why well-intentioned conservative educational reforms could damage the system further. Bustling philistinism is the last thing we need—especially since it has a secret appeal for the educational interests. It provides official sanctification for anti-élitist instincts: many teachers are far happier instructing their pupils how to order an ice-cream in French than pretending to introduce them to French literature. Already, educationalists are responding over-zealously to calls for greater pragmatism. A recent examination paper on religious knowledge contained little about the Bible, but a lot about the sociology of prisons. There was even a nice drawing of a prison cell; it looked quite comfortable. A well-designed cell is the apotheosis of British utilitarianism—the ultimate blend of material and moral concern.

THE TEACHERS are the prison chaplains. They mutter pieties to the inmates, but have long ceased to believe in the humanities themselves. It is perfectly true that Britain has performed badly in technological education, but there is another truth that is far more painful to admit. The fact is that we are the only country I know which combines an anti-business tradition in education with an anti-intellectual tradition. America can be accused of the one, but not the other. France too, in reverse. The lugubrious distinction of having both we share with no one.

The problem is on such a scale that it is psychologically hard for anyone—of whatever political views—to confront it. So another layer of pretence becomes necessary. You can get agreement from virtually everyone in the British educational system and from all political parties for the following proposition: *"The British educational system is too academic, and not sufficiently practical and vocational."*

The mind acquiesces numbly in what sounds like an appealing truism. The Government agrees because it wants more scientists and a better-skilled work force. The teachers agree because they cling to the illusion that they do an exacting job in the humanities. The parents argree because they want their children to be employed. The child agrees because it believes that anything academic sounds too much like hard work, so the less of it the better. The reality is, of course, that education in the humanities is not remotely academic enough.

The danger of pretence is that it lingers, becomes a way of life. First it forms a social patina, then a subtle corrosion. We have our little excesses over race and feminism, of course, but they are not the central problem. The distinctive British contribution to the obscurantist mix is class-consciousness in education—less apparent on the surface than it was, but only because it is fine-ground within the mixture.

Let me give two brief illustrations, which come from different ends of the educational spectrum. The betrayal of the aspirations of British working-class children by Left-wing and liberal educational theorists is the saddest chapter in recent British social history. In Britain (as in America), the 19th century was an era of educational idealism, and we can be good at giving practical expression to our ideals. The following quotation from the dedication of *The Grammar of the English Language* (1818) by the English thinker and social activist William Cobbett, is an example. He describes his book as:

> ". . . . a work, having for its objects to lay the solid foundations of literary knowledge amongst the labouring classes of the community, to give practical effect to the natural genius found in the Soldier, the Sailor, the Apprentice, and the Ploughboy, and to make that genius a perennial source of wealth, strength, and safety to the Kingdom. Such a work naturally seeks the approbation of Your Majesty who, amongst all the Royal Personages of the present age, is the only one who appears to have justly estimated the value of the people."

The dedication was to Queen Caroline—and the fact that she was an addict of romantic fiction rounds off Cobbett's point nicely. The fact that grammar is no longer taught to ploughboys, but only to those who can buy it in private schools, would have caused him greater grief.

CONTRAST COBBETT'S hopes with the prevailing ethos amongst teachers today. With some exceptions, it is a sour, discontented profession, resentful of everything—including its own mediocrity. There is no trace of idealism: teachers have become educators in ordinariness. As Carlyle said of the French Revolution, the very tailors have become *sans-culottistes*. In the teaching of history, the guiding principle is not too far removed from Mao's slogan during the Cultural Revolution: "Remember past bitterness." In the teaching of literature, it is an aversion from that past, and a passive hostility to literary excellence or intellectual values. Instead, proletarian tastes are indulged or nurtured.

It would be wrong to see this as the result of some Marxist conspiracy. Marxism, after all, is a discipline. Berdyayev was a former Marxist professor; the experience obviously taught him something. In its Russian form, Marxism has gone along with a certain educational idealism and a reverence for the national culture, however self-serving. Ten-year-old Russians learn by heart Lermontov's poem "Borodino"; few English children will ever read Byron's "On the Eve of Waterloo". I sometimes think that a full-blown Marxist conspiracy in English education would have been more bracing. What we have had instead is a vulgarised, bastardised version of the creed: not Marxist, but marxoidal.

At the other end of the scale, Britain's universities have been surprisingly silent while all this has been going on. Now that they see how difficult it is to recruit undergraduates from the less-advantaged sections of society, they are

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conscience-stricken. Social conscience being an unsure guide to action, over-reaction is not unknown. Cambridge University recently produced a video designed to attract more students from the state schools. It depicted its students as a jolly, classless lot. Jolly they may be, classless (in the moneyed sense) they are not. The video makes mock of the notion that Cambridge undergraduates speak to their tutors in Latin. In other words, it simultaneously speculates on popular ignorance about academic values and practices, and reinforces contempt for them—all in a gently humorous English way. No better example of the agonising contortions of class-consciousness could be imagined.

There is an element of fear in this humour, and fear in high places is always unattractive, especially when it mixes uneasily with resentments from beneath. The proletarianised teacher resents the notion of a canon; the liberal intellectual is afraid to be thought to be dispensing one. This type of liberalism is presented as openness. In fact, it is highly exclusive. It excludes the majority from the best while leaving those in authority as the sole guardians of a canon whose existence they no longer believe in, or do not have the courage to assert.

Tenuous as it may seem, I believe that educational and intellectual values have a lot to do with peace. The idea is hardly original; some of it I cribbed from Kant. But it also arises from the experience of twenty years as a diplomat, dealing mostly with Communist countries. The idea is, of course, that peace will only be secure when we have representative democracies in all countries. But democracies will not function as such until they are educated; and education without ethics is no education at all.

Joseph Brodsky has said that "a degree of familiarity with history . . . is our only available source of an ethical education". Certainly it is a first step. Inevitably, there will be limits to how deep and broad that familiarity can go. It may be foolish to seek to turn electors into intellectuals, but not to educate voters to respect the intellect.

AS I HAVE SAID, my impression is that Communism, as it retreats, will leave an ethical as well as a political vacuum. I am not sure if you can have different brands of vacuum, but we seem to be trying. Nor am I sure whether you get a greater sense of emptiness when two vacuums blend. It is one of those questions which I am content to leave to the physicists. And if nuclear disarmament proceeds, there will be plenty of underemployed physicists to answer it . . . .

Stone

Almighty, endless, metamorphosis!
Birth of the deadliest thing on the planet,
The Verb into noun, the process into stasis.

Damn all these currents of feeling that kiss
And wear me, so much, with their wetness, or grit,
Almighty, endless, metamorphosis.

Sunshine, tears, won't melt my heart like Ice's.
I'm dead hard. Whatever moves, I'll kill it,
The Verb into noun, the process into stasis.

Silence: a stare: are my anaesthetists.
I freeze out pressure, heat. I won't admit
Almighty, endless, metamorphosis.

I went to pieces once; perhaps round this
More grainy core, less brittle, I can fit
The Verb into noun, the process into stasis.

Made of dead reactions, buried stresses,
Grist to milling Earth, I'll never quit
Almighty, endless, metamorphosis,
The Verb into noun, the process into stasis.

Gareth Calway

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Patricia Lesko

Nothing Is What It Seems To Be

ALEX THREW me out of the apartment the day after I served Beef Wellington, artichokes, and peanut butter to his boss along with plastic knives and forks. I told both of them, as I spread the extra-crunchy on top of the meat, that plastic knives and forks were a definite political statement. And I meant it, too, though I don't particularly think extra-crunchy is politically correct. Only God knows where the nuts come from; but that was all there was in the house.

When I pulled out the jar, Alex froze. As I spread it over the Beef Wellington, he reached over and grasped my wrist. He ran his big hand over his forehead and looked at me with eyes like shined steel. I told him that being politically correct was more important than hollandaise sauce. He just tightened his grip.

I can't say that at the time his fingers hurt, though later I noticed the marks, bruises the same colour of purple as my eyelids when I have less than seven hours of sleep at night. Alex has strong fingers; he plays the piano two hours in the evening and three hours on Saturday. He plays Beethoven, the sonatas mostly, and Rachmaninoff. Alex thinks Rachmaninoff's music is masculine. Anyway, he has strong hands. He likes to crack English walnuts when he thinks no one's looking. I always kept a supply for him in an antique, blue porcelain bowl on the dining-room table so that he could pretend that no one noticed how he liked to crack them.

Alex wanted to be a professional pianist. He ended up as a securities analyst with a Steinway in the living-room and a Porsche 914 targa in the garage. I wanted a house in Connecticut, by the river, with a herb garden beside the back door, fruit trees, a grape arbour, a small vegetable garden and a fieldstone fireplace. Alex gave me a matching blue Porsche 914 targa, piano lessons with a member of the New York Phil., a new ankle-length, black sable coat every three years and a pair of diamond ear-rings that, as he put it, would make the other women at the Harbour Club blink as though their contact lenses had floated off centre. He also gave me two children.

And as I spread the peanut butter over the artichokes, I thought of Arthur and Margaret, both off at Brown and sending home short notes on blue-veined paper about their plans to come back to New York for the holidays. What would Arthur think of peanut butter on beef? Margaret would surely find it amusing; she has a sense of humour like peanut butter on Beef Wellington. Arthur is more like his father: the grey eyes, black hair parted on the left, big hands, wide shoulders and narrow waist that look good in a double-breasted suit. I wanted to name Arthur after his father, but Alex wouldn't hear of it. One Alexander Lane Williams was enough, he said. So we named the baby Arthur Emerson Williams. Emerson is my maiden name.

My father always liked to claim same blood with Ralph Waldo Emerson. My mother made sure that everyone thought he was only joking. The only way my father could be related to Ralph Waldo Emerson, she would say, smiling, was if Ralph had fathered a bastard. Then, she would add, smiling still, my grandfather certainly was one. But nothing is as it seems to be; six months after Daddy died, I found out that we really were related to Ralph Waldo.

We named Margaret after Alex's mother, Margaret. Mother Margaret was what she told me to call her. Is she a saint? I asked myself. I mentioned that to Alex, and he just looked up and reminded me of his family's strict agnosticism. "We don't believe, thank God", he liked to say in public. His father used to say the same thing before a taxi with a priest in it jumped a curb and splayed him on to Fifth Avenue and 79th Street. Alex inherited $35,000 outright and another $135,000 earmarked for the children.

My father left me $1,000 and his stamp collection. Nobody paid attention to Daddy's stamp collection but me. Mother hated the clutter and was jealous of the time he took with it. I loved the exotic pictures, the colours, the antiquity. Alex had the collection appraised three days after I brought it home and we found out that it was worth close to $50,000. Afterward, Alex took the stamps and put them in the safe-deposit box (I had arranged them according to year in a glass case in the dining-room). I went to the bank, took out the 1812 one-half cent Borneo, brought it home and put it in the picture frame along with Daddy's photo. He always loved that stamp best; he never cared that it was worth $10,000. Every time that we looked at it together, he told me that he

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loved the stamp because it had been his father's and his father's before him. Alex has Daddy's stamp collection, and I have the one-half cent 1812 Borneo.

THE PIANO LESSONS have more to do with the dinner the other night. When the children went off to grade school, Alex decided that I might as well take up the piano like everyone else. Margaret and Arthur had begun lessons at the age of four. Alex announced that I was twenty-six years late in beginning my studies. He'd begun the piano at the age of four, and by his eighth birthday could play the Brahms B-flat.

The night his boss, Jerry, came to dinner, Alex and I were playing the piano. I never liked playing duets with him. In fact, I never practised when he was home. When he was, I would deliberately slow the pace, or miss a note. We were playing *Chopsticks.* He would never condescend to play *Heart and Soul,* but he would play *Chopsticks,* because *that* was Chopin. I was playing the bottom and Alex the top when, suddenly, I pushed him over and broke out in the Brahms B-flat. Alex stood and became quieter and quieter as I played. I laughed and said that dammit, maybe I was forty years late, but what difference did it make to old Johannes anyway? And forty years late I played the Brahms B-flat better than Alex ever had. I bagged the first movement, as Alex would say: I didn't miss a single note. He just stood there and stared at my hands. There was no sheet music, just my hands sliding back and forth between the clefs like two north magnets pushed together. I finished and slammed down the lid over the keys. I stared at the gold letters that spelled Steinway and Alex stared at me. I laughed again, opened up the lid and then started in on *Great Balls of Fire*, by Jerry Lee Lewis, "The Killer".

I have small hands. Alex says that my skin is still softer than a baby's, but there are some age spots now, right above the knuckles. When there weren't, he used to take my hands in his and hold them gently against his chest as he bent to kiss me.

After I played *Great Balls of Fire*, the doorbell rang and Alex went to let Jerry in. Jerry is big and round; his face reminds me of a hot cherry jawbreaker. He has big cauliflower ears because before he became the biggest independent securities analyst in New York City he was a wrestler. Alex respects his boss. He once told me that he would respect any man who could hang a half-nelson on $750,000 worth of bonds seventy-two hours before they were due to expire and come away with both balls and 300% net profit. One time, I asked how Jerry could have more than two balls. It was a joke, but he just glanced up from the *New York Times* Sunday Business Section, as if a fly had buzzed past his nose, and then went back to his paper.

After we got married and Alex went into securities, I tried to understand his work. I asked about the bond market. He replied that I'd do better to worry about the supermarket. I queried him every now and then as to the price of sugar futures, or what pork bellies were bringing in the Chicago pits. Alex did his best to explain, at least as far as he can stand to explain anything to anyone. And after a year I stopped asking about winter orange juice futures and concentrated on remembering to drop two ice cubes into his juice in the morning.

In return, Alex bought me a new sable coat every three years. I told him that the thought of wearing dead animals didn't appeal to me. He said that I was being silly; the sables were bred and raised for slaughter. I never said anything, but every time he helped me on with my sable coat I would break out in goosebumps: when we went to the Met; the gallery openings; art auctions; the Harbour Club; the antique salons. The thought of death riding my shoulders, enveloping me, made me want to say a silent prayer. So I made a habit of compromise. I took the coat along, but always kept it carefully folded over my arm. That way, I would only break out in goosebumps on one half of my body.

AFTER I spread the peanut butter on the Beef Wellington, I left the dining-room and went to the foyer closet, took out the latest sable coat and slit the lining with the carving knife. Alex, who had been explaining the peanut butter to Jerry, heard the ripping and marched into the foyer. By that time, I had the entire middle back seam slashed clear through. I'll have to remember to write to the carving-knife company and tell them how nicely that knife carves silk and sable, like cream cheese. Alex took the coat and stared at the gash. He tried to wipe away the peanut butter that clung to the lining and fur, but heard Jerry coming, tossed the coat back into the closet and closed the door.

Alex is funny about open doors. He goes around the house closing the bathroom doors, the bedroom doors. To him, an open door is an unfinished thought, a half-completed gesture. He can't be in the same room with an open door without closing it; just like he can't be in the same room with a bookshelf for more than fifteen minutes without realigning all the books. Sometimes, Alex made me feel like an open door, or a crooked book. Maybe that's why I put the peanut butter on the artichokes. It's not that I particularly like dark-green and tan together. I prefer blue and peach or red and white. Alex likes green and tan, though his favourite colour is dark-blue. When he showed me my new car, I said that I would have preferred red. He laughed. That's the one thing about me he always loved: the cute way I didn't understand the relationship between proper colours and important possessions. Security analysts and

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their wives drive black or dark-blue Porsches, never red. Alex meant well, he really did.

That's why I married him. There was no man in the world who had better intentions than Alex. On our honeymoon, for example, he tossed a full pack of lovely English cigarettes past my head and out the window, which overlooked the Kärtnerstrasse, for my own good. I had promised to stop smoking. Nobody cared if I gave myself lung cancer but Alex. And as he came out of the bathroom, I stood by the window blowing smoke toward St Stephen's cathedral. Mother Margaret had sent us on our honeymoon to Vienna.

Everywhere we went, the guidebook told the same story. "This monument or that has been reconstructed by the Austrian people to its original condition prior to the Allied bombing during World War II." Plaster meticulously re-spackled; stones reset; the liberty bell of St Stephen's recast; the torn face of the Opera House resurrected with post-War tender loving care; St Stephen's icons dug out from amid the rubble and returned to their respective niches; a bloody Christ pock-marked by shrapnel; a stone column near the altar as thick as a redwood trunk and black from smoke where Doric meets Gothic.

Peanut butter and Gothic: Margaret would surely appreciate that combination. Alex and Arthur would just raise their left eyebrows into perfect St Louis arches and stare. And that is precisely what Alex did as I walked past him out of the foyer to go into the bedroom. I heard him tell Jerry that the dinner would be rainchecked. Both of them laughed and I heard the sound of big palms meet expensive jacket fabric—worsted, I think—as I set the carving knife down on the dining-room table. Alex wears worsted year round. I know that Jerry wears worsted in the summer, but I couldn't say if his suit was worsted that night. Anyway, they pounded each other on the shoulder and Jerry left.

Alex called: "Ginny? Where are you?"

I didn't answer him. I was busy looking through my jewellery box for the ear-rings. The box, a gift from Mother Margaret, has always reminded me of a coffin. It is simple, oblong, ebony and has two brass handles. I exhumed the ear-rings and put them into my mouth as Alex opened the bedroom door. He closed it and stared at me.

THE DIAMONDS, each a full carat and a half, tasted cold. I flicked my tongue against the clasps and pushed them into the left side of my mouth. Alex just stood there on the 18th-century Persian rug and rubbed his palm back and forth across his forehead. His eyes were slits, like two strips of steel, or I would have reminded him to take off his shoes. That carpet, the first thing we ever bid on together, was woven with gold and silver threads. I closed my jewellery box lid and went over to the French doors which opened out on to the balcony.

I pushed open the doors and Manhattan winked at me as I sucked on the ear-rings. The traffic sounds blended together into a symphony of brakes, horns and tyres. The night air was warmer, warmer than Alex, and I stretched my arms as if to embrace the co-op building across the street. Alex, still silent, closed the tall doors and followed me outside. The diamonds were warm by then, and the clasps tasted faintly like one of Mother Margaret's silver forks.

"Ginny?" said Alex.

I transferred the ear-rings to the right side of my mouth. "Yes?"

"Just what is the matter with you?"

I put the ear-rings underneath my tongue and almost cried out when one of the clasps nipped at the tender underside.

"What's the matter with you?" he repeated.

I leaned over the balcony's polished brass railing and looked down at the traffic snakes slithering up and down both sides of the avenue.

"Get the hell away from there." He grabbed my shoulders and pulled me back. His fingers bit into my shoulders just as they'd bitten into my wrists. I shook free and leaned backwards over the railing; the ear-rings tumbled to the back of my throat and the vertebrae in my lower back popped as I arched my body.

"Answer me, dammit."

I could see the vein in the middle of his forehead pulsating, but his voice was controlled. I moved the diamonds as far back in my throat as they would go. Above, the full moon outshone all but the brightest stars.

"Virginia, what have you got to say for yourself? How could you embarrass me like that in front of Jerry? How could you do something as stupid as that?" The vein pulsated quicker with every question. I looked away from him and back up at the sky.

"Answer me, you bitch. You made a fool out of me."

I stared at him and then spit the ear-rings out into my palm, like two plum pits. I held them out so that they caught the light from the bedroom and he could see them, closed my hand, rattled them together like dice and then tossed the matched set over my shoulder into the air. Alex looked as if they'd floated for a few seconds before tumbling fifteen storeys to the street. Snake Eyes. At that moment I thought of the weekend he and I had gone to Las Vegas. Once, while Alex was playing craps, he asked me to roll for him. I didn't want to, but he forced the dice into my hand and curled my fingers around them. I warmed the cubes between my palms and threw them on to the table: Snake Eyes. Alex lost $1,500. Two diamond snake eyes tumbling down toward two blind traffic snakes inching up the street. Alex looked at me, as the diamonds tumbled down, the same way he'd looked at me at the Nugget as the caller raked away his pile of chips.

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I played the bottom of *Heart and Soul* as Alex packed my suitcase the next morning. Over and over, only the bottom and never the top. Alex told me that I was going to take a vacation and that I could come home when I'd regained my senses and apologised. He added that I wouldn't have longer than two weeks, because the children were due home for Christmas. I said nothing, just played *Heart. Heart* and *Heart.* No soul.

When he asked me what he should pack, I said: "Just the peanut butter and Daddy's picture." He arched his left eyebrow and walked out of the living-room. I heard him crack a walnut as he passed through the dining-room. The cracking stopped and he said: "I'll pack you a few things, and you can just buy anything else you need when you get there." All heart and no soul, just Chopin and Rachmaninoff. I smiled and stared at the bruises on my wrist: just like Alex to care if I'll need anything after I get where he's sending me.

Bat Poem

Bat poems should be written black on black
then black on evening light
when torn triangular wing-writing makes
cursive, quickflickering remarks
along the edge of night

Ninety percent unseen, mysterious,
they should be a continuous-
ly vanishing surprise,
from pockets of invisibility
materialise
showing anarchic unpredictability
of line-length, disappearing as we stare
into the oval window of the Moon—
into thin air

Illogical, tangential,
they should make sudden dashes after moth
or beetle thoughts
while trawling dusk for truth
or gnats
or both

They may appear to magnify
bright Orange Underwings
craneflies
deep ashtree sighs
distorting fair proportion between things
for Flittermouse or Noctule's fingerbones
are longer than their thighs

Bat poems should be silent,
listening,
their gargoyle faces funnelling
the echoes of their own
stuttering decibels
home to the signal drums
of Pipistrelles

For bats perceive by hearing:-
dancing swarms,
cockchafers, humans loitering alone,
tree shadows by the lane;
high fequencies must conjure solid forms
clear on mind's radar screen.

Anna Adams

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Sarvepalli Gopal

Of Skylarks & Shirting

The English Language in India

THE PLACE OF the English language in India since Independence must be seen against the background of developments during the years of British rule. Education in that language had been introduced both to provide recruits for the subordinate services and to teach Indians the rudiments of a culture which was commended as superior to their own. Quite apart from the question of the impact of foreign influences, the use of the language itself became an issue. The nationalist idea was being fostered in India through the means of the English language; and to imperial apologists this furnished evidence that India was not a nation—for to many theorists of nationalism in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, language was the crucial test.

Indians saw this as a restricted definition, based on European experience. They preferred to think of a nation, in Lord Acton's phrase, as a moral and political being—and, far from regarding expression of their sentiments in the English language as demeaning, saw advantages in strengthening their case by using the resources which knowledge of English opened up. There is no instance in India of such an incident as that of Jean Joseph Rabearivals, the Malagasy poet, who killed himself in 1937 because he could not reconcile his nationalism with the French language and culture in which he was obliged to work. Indians in the days of British rule (perhaps because for centuries bilingualism had been the accepted norm among the educated—with knowledge of Sanskrit or Persian expected, along with their own mother-tongue) saw no contradiction between commitment to their own country and culture, and total ease in a foreign language.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali, but translated many of his poems into English. Gandhi, who transformed the national movement by drawing the illiterate masses into politics, laid down as early as 1921 that one of the essentials of India's freedom was to get rid of what he described as the infatuation for English. But he himself wrote English clearly and forcefully; and the British authorities in India recognised soon enough, to their chagrin, that he had a fine appreciation of the words he used. Nehru took pains to attain sufficient proficiency in Hindi to be able to communicate with large numbers of his people; but it was primarily in English that his thoughts were formulated and expressed. Widely read in English literature, he wrote with a tense elegance and control of phrase, and was capable on special occasions of superb flights of English prose; he hailed the coming of India's freedom with a passage that has moved into anthologies of English writing.

Yet Nehru awaited with equanimity what he believed would be the swift and natural decline of the English language in a free India. Except to the small Anglo-Indian minority whose mother-tongue it was, English was a foreign language which spread only because the British made it the medium of instruction. Like Latin in medieval Europe and Sanskrit and Persian in pre-British India, English had been learnt by a small number in various parts of the country; a new linguistic caste evolved, isolated from the millions of ordinary men and women.

After 1947, Nehru and his colleagues rid themselves of any prejudices born of the feeling that English was the language that had helped the British to hold the Empire together. The first generation of independent India's leadership had no such complexes. They believed that a language belonged to those who spoke it.

Language communicates experience, and can transcend the boundaries of the culture of its origin. When, in 1954, an old Irish revolutionary started a letter to Nehru in Gaelic

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and then switched to English with the remark, "Forgive me for using the language of the enemy", Nehru's reaction was one of mild and amused surprise. To him, language was a part of the history of a people, with each word calling up images, and yet alive and expanding to take new circumstances into account. If a language—while basing itself on its ancient roots and associations—was receptive to growing needs, it would be strong and vigorous, an index of the national character. But the whole background of the English language was unknown to the Indian people. Nehru believed that it could never become a living language widely spoken in India; for the educational and cultural development of the masses only the regional languages were suited.

Among these, the one with the widest range was Hindi—covering, with its variations, a large part of northern India. Nehru felt that Hindi should be promoted as the language linking the whole country. Basic Hindi, with a vocabulary of about 5,000 words, and borrowing from Urdu, English, and other languages, should be developed and could be picked up easily by most Indians, for the Indian languages are allied to each other.

So Nehru was in favour of gradually abandoning the use of English as an official language. He also expected and even desired it to fade out as the link-language. There would be a psychological value in this, he felt—for, although he was not worried about past ties with imperialism, it had hurt him, in his tours as Prime Minister to other parts of the world than Britain and the English-speaking countries, to note the surprise and contempt with which the use of English by Indians conversing with each other was received. It was regarded as a sign of mental degradation.

However, Nehru conceded that it would be foolish to drop English altogether. It had already gained ground in India, was becoming an important world language, and was indispensable for the advance of science and technology to which he attached such importance in building a modern and forward-looking India. So he wished English to be studied as a second language, and for most people as a language of comprehension rather than a language leading to the study of English literature. From the 1930s Nehru had been an exponent of Basic English.

In accord with this reasoning, Nehru supported the provision in the Constitution that Hindi would be the official language of the Union, but that English could share that status for the next fifteen years—that is, until 1965. Like most Indians, he believed that during this period Hindi would gain general acceptance, as well as the strength and suppleness to serve as a common language.

The expected did not happen, although Hindi perforce made some headway. In the armed services, for example, where even in British days a pidgin Hindi had been in vogue, words of command were now converted to Hindi since only the officers understood English; but in most areas of public activity the English language stood its ground. The enthusiasts for Hindi, finding fifteen years far too long and seeking to displace English well before 1965, in fact achieved the contrary result of giving it new life.

Hindi did not develop in a way that could be understood by the masses, and even Nehru was driven to complain that it was often beyond his comprehension. Government agencies like All India Radio used a very stilted and artificial language, and English words, instead of being incorporated into Hindi, were translated in ways that sounded ridiculous. The non-Hindi-speaking people also began to fear that a ban on English before they had even acquired a sufficient knowledge of Hindi would generate handicaps in their search for employment.

The economic dimension of the language problem soon spread out to become a political issue, and the agitation against Hindi in southern India posed a threat to Indian unity. To Nehru it was clear that any decision on this question of Hindi replacing English could not be hustled; it would have to emerge on a basis of consent. Maintenance of national unity was more important than anything else: the tensions that encompassed demands for linguistic provinces, and the problems that followed their creation in the mid-1950s made this clearer than ever. Passions were aroused in all parts of the country by a narrow love of language. Local languages rather than Hindi provided the challenge to English, lessening a sense of community and endangering the national fabric.

This was a problem alien to Nehru's understanding—for to him, while language was important, the administrative boundaries of provinces were only a marginal problem. But he realised that linguistic rivalries had become a pressing political issue, and that the stress on regional languages, however justified in itself, was weakening the concept of India. He was all the more eager to leave alone the matter of Hindi *versus* English: if, in their anxiety to hasten what would have been a natural development, the supporters of Hindi adopted poor and self-defeating tactics, Nehru although not pleased with the result did not regard it as a severe setback. Hindi as it was evolving was neither graceful, artistic, nor generally understood; enthusiasm for it was often a cloak for revivalism and for Hindu chauvinism. If, because of resistance to Hindi, the regional languages were going to become predominant—with no link-language at all—then it was better to adhere to English as an official language for the whole country, the more so since English was establishing itself as the leading world language and was the main means of access to scientific and technological research.

In 1959, therefore, Nehru promised that there would be no imposition of any language by decree; English was to remain an associate, additional language for an indefinite period, while the final decision on replacement of English by Hindi would rest with those sections of the Indian people who did not know Hindi. Four years later this assurance was translated into permissive legislation, which provided that English might continue to be used after 1965, in addition to Hindi, for the official purposes of the Union and in Parliament. In 1968, four years after Nehru's death, this was further spelt out to stipulate the use of English in addition to Hindi for certain specified official purposes. No time-limit was placed on the supplanting of English by Hindi; it could be used indefinitely, unless the legislatures of all the non-Hindi-speaking states demanded otherwise.

Nehru had been unwilling to provide an explicit commit-

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ment that English would continue as an official language for ever. That seemed to him unnecessary and even constitutionally improper. But the supporters of English need have no cause to worry: a mature people acted by consensus on such issues, and no Government would be so foolish as to create the problems and difficulties which would follow from seeking to secure the acceptance of Hindi by force. Nor did the functional compromise seem to him weighted against Hindi. It was only through the Indian languages, which had deep roots in the minds and hearts of the people, that the national awakening which had taken place in the years before 1947 could be consolidated. These regional languages, however, with their limited provenance, would have a restrictive effect. Promotion of Hindi was part of the effort of building the nation, and the life of the nation was much longer than one or two generations. So Hindi could afford to wait.

THE RESULT HAS BEEN that, while Hindi has waited, the number of Indians with a knowledge of English has expanded, and now amounts to over 4% of the total population. It is reckoned that about 35 million Indians speak and write English of some type or other, and this English-speaking population is spread across the whole country. So English, besides being an associate official language throughout the country, and the dominant language in the north-eastern states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, may be described as India's only non-regional language. It is a link-language in more than an administrative sense, in that it counters blinkered provincialism. There are at least twenty regional variations of English in India, but those who speak and write it in slightly different ways can understand each other; they form a cultural constituency. English is the language of communication of the civil services, of the managers and senior employees of the public and private sectors of the economy, and of the professions.

A uniform law for the country means that English will continue indefinitely (given the state of development of Hindi) in the High Courts and the Supreme Court. The need to avoid intellectual isolation within India as well as from the rest of the world necessitates its retention by the academic community: it is the principal medium of higher education and of advanced research in all fields. Hindi has been introduced as an optional medium in examinations for recruitment to the civil services, but its limited vocabulary and the lack of adequate textbooks in that language leave the advantage with candidates opting for English.

That knowledge of English is the passport to employment at higher levels in all fields, the unavoidable avenue to status and wealth, and is mandatory to all those planning to migrate abroad has, since Independence, meant a tremendous enthusiasm for studying it. Schools which teach in English from the start have proliferated, and admission to them is more prized than to those where English is merely the compulsory second language. In the years immediately after the British left, standards of English teaching not surprisingly fell; and a quip of those times was that the official language of India was incorrect English. To remedy this, in 1958 an institute for the training of teachers of the English language was set up. (Nehru's only proviso in this matter was that the institute should not be headed by an American.)

Textbooks for teaching in English, adapted to the local context, are now produced in India. It was Nehru who laid down the policy, which has by and large continued to this day, that no restriction should be placed on the importation of books. He overruled recommendations based either on the need to conserve foreign exchange or on the desirability, even on rare occasions, of censorship on moral grounds. (He was not happy with the wide circulation in India of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but vetoed a proposal to ban *Lolita*.) Today many books are much cheaper in India than they are in Britain because of the practice of importing sheets and binding them locally. The Government also subsidises reprints of standard textbooks. To add to all this, piracy—primarily of pulp novels—is rampant. No traveller by air within India can fail to notice the popularity of Mills & Boon love stories and James Hadley Chase, while children with a knowledge of English depend heavily on Enid Blyton and Western comics.

India ranks as the world's third largest producer of books in English (after the United States and Britain). More books are published annually in English than in all the regional languages taken together. Penguin last year started publishing in India two books a month on Indian themes or by Indian authors. Serious journals of science and scholarship manage to survive despite limited circulation and magazines of popular interest multiply. Of over 20,000 registered newspapers nearly 4,000 are printed in English; these are second in number only to those in Hindi.

Both radio and television have regular programmes and news services in English, and the University Grants Commission sponsors televised educational features in English daily for one hour. Consumerism is promoted by advertisements in English. The film industry caters to the large majority in Hindi and the regional languages: but a film in English produced in India with Indian actors could be seen in London last summer, and H. R. F. Keating's Inspector Ghote and other characters bring home vividly the nuances of spoken Indian English. Amateur theatricals—so prominent in the days of the British in India—survive in the big cities; but more widespread is rock music. The words of these songs are far better known than the works of Shakespeare.

THIS WIDE AND VARIED use of English cannot disguise the fact that it is essentially the language of the Indian Establishment. Throughout India's history, language is a marker of culture: and the language of the "higher" culture has been first Sanskrit, later Persian, and then, for the last 150 years, English. Indians have associated English with modernisation, although, as Japan's example proves, knowledge of a European language is not necessary for this purpose. Although English in India is the badge-of-privilege of a small minority dispersed over the entire country, it can be said that English is the carrier of a *national* culture when compared to the limited stretch of Hindi, let alone the other regional languages.

Yet even here there is a problem. Any such national cul-

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ture in the English medium tends to become weakened at the roots; for the tenacious indigenous culture goes back to pre-British days, and there are inherent difficulties in understanding one culture in the language of another. Philosophers, for example, have not found it easy to translate precisely into English terms like *dharma* and *nirvana.*

Perhaps I might also cite an example from history, where transfer of ideas has given rise to novel situations. At Amritsar the worship is of the *Granth Saheb,* the sacred scripture of the Sikhs; and the temple there was known as the Durbar Saheb. But it was the dome of the shrine that caught the British eye, and the whole complex came to be known as the Golden Temple. That name has continued to the present day, with the result that attention has shifted to the buildings rather than remaining with the texts and the sanctuary where they are housed.

English, however, has helped to extend the dimensions of the regional languages. Many creative writers in the Indian languages have a knowledge of English, and have taken advantage of this. The forms, structure, and content of contemporary literature in these languages show the impact of English language and literature, old and new. Even the novel is an imported literary form. But these assets are heavily shadowed by the division, which the use of English consolidates, between the few who govern and the many who are governed. English, no longer the language of empire or of a culture which claims to be superior, is the language of the ruling class. While the Indian culture in the English language provides all those responsive to it with a sense of community, it cuts them off from the vast number who do not know the language. This separation is constantly deepened, with the medium of English leading to better schools and colleges, greater opportunities, and a higher economic and social status.

This is an unnatural situation in a working democracy based on adult suffrage. As politics in India broadens down from Delhi to the states, and with the increasing political involvement of the rural population, English-speaking India and politically-conscious India diverge more and more. In itself a healthy development, this adds to tensions between the minority at the top who know English, and the many millions—armed with the vote—who do not.

THIS WOULD SOON spell the end of English in India—if politics provided all the answers. Nehru himself believed that English would not so much be atrophied by the democratic process as wither because of malnutrition. A living language has its roots in the masses, and any language without such sustenance would rapidly lose vitality. Certainly, to many Indians before 1947 English was an alien language in which they were compelled to study a foreign literature. Skylarks and daffodils, sceptred isles and country churchyards meant very little to them and stirred no memories; it is partly this which Malcolm Muggeridge had in mind when he spoke of enraged and unemployed graduates chasing the British out of India, hurling after them curses and copies of *The Oxford Book of English Verse.*

With the coming of Independence, however, English—even if it could not be expected to become a language of mass communication—began to sink roots into the upper layers of the Indian soil. A few Indians still write English as it should be written, and do so with skill and grace. Why do they wish to do so?

Yeats was certain that only in one's own language could one write with music and vigour. Joseph Conrad, one of the greatest of those novelists who have written in a language which was not their mother-tongue, has a chilling story called "Amy Foster". A Slav peasant, shipwrecked on the English coast, lives for years in a village in Kent. Everyone shuns him except a dull girl who marries him; but even she takes her child and leaves him when, in a fever, he speaks in his own language. Bertrand Russell, who knew Conrad, thinks there could be something of Conrad himself in this story: the loneliness in his life and the strong will rather than the aptitude which underlay his work.

IF, THEN, writing in a language which is not their own does not come easily even to the best, why do so many persevere in this effort? Joseph Brodsky has placed such writers in three categories: those who write out of necessity, those with superhuman ambition, and those who have a need for further estrangement. The best Indian writers in English do so out of necessity—not because English was once the imperial and is now an official language, or because they are in exile in Britain, but because it is in that language that they can best express themselves. They are not even aware that they are writing in a foreign language. A distinguished novel in verse was published recently, set in California but written by an Indian; over the past year we have had some highly-rated novels by Indians, and most of these authors are very young. So it is not just the old generation, educated in the days of the Raj, which finds English easy to handle.

Joseph Brodsky's other two categories claim some Indians. Eager to secure a world audience or to distance themselves from their own country, they seek to write what may be called British Standard English, and sometimes do not quite succeed. Giving up an inherited identity for a literary tradition into which they are not fully absorbed, they bring to mind Gordon Bottomley's sneer about "Matthew Arnold in a *sari*".

But most Indians who today speak and write English do so with an authentic Indian voice. To them English is no longer an uncompromisingly foreign tongue. An Australian writer, Sylvia Lawson, has defined what she terms the paradox of her country's culture:

> "To know enough of the metropolitan world, colonials must, in limited ways at least, move and think internationally; to resist it strongly enough for the colony to cease to be colonial and become its own place, they must become nationalists."

This paradox becomes even sharper for Indians using English, for most of them have a language of their own. The best of them combine a distinctive feel for the Indian experience with loyalty to the best traditions of English literature, bringing a world view to bear on their home country and

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keeping exclusiveness under control, but without betraying their inheritance.

India is not a country with a large community of British settlers who might have resisted the influence of the local context. Nor is English in India, as in the Caribbean, the sole means of communication. The languages of India have a history which in most cases goes back over 1,000 years; and, just as English has influenced them during the last 100 years, they now influence English. They give it an indigenous flavour and promote a new idiom. Gandhi, for example, spoke of "a Himalayan blunder". A character in one of R. K. Narayan's novels says how fond he is of the sound of curds falling on warm rice. An Indian author based in the West has told us that in a novel published last year he first wrote of "a peg to hang ideas on" and then, realising that a peg had no meaning to Indian readers, revised this to read "a bamboo pole to hang ideas on". And some politicians in India have been described as "crocodiles in loin-cloths"—a phrase that would evoke no real image in Britain.

Glossaries are now being published of words of common usage in Indian English, such as "bed-sheets", "shirting", "suiting"—the list is constantly growing. Many such words, and even the grammar often used, arouse associations with the Indian background. The load of English literature is put down and there is no servitude to Fowler.

Inability to keep in touch with the changes taking place in English usage in Britain is compensated for by the changes taking place in various parts of India. The Indian literature now being written in the English language is a new chapter in English literature.

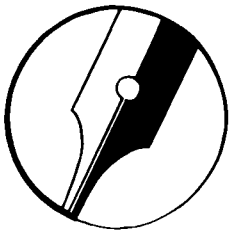
In 1901, when Queen Victoria died, an anonymous loyalist published a couplet in an English newspaper in Calcutta:

> *Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,*
> *Into the grave the great Queen dashes.*

Here a knowledge of English words is combined with a total lack of any sense of the English language.

Over 70 years later an Indian poet, capable of writing cor-

From Frontside to Backside



THERE IS **some innocent enjoyment to be had from seeing English at work in India, just as there is in reading English menus in foreign restaurants. In common with many people using the putty language, Indians roll and squeeze it to suit their needs and add some ingredients of their own. Indian English is much like the Queen's in content, but has a distinctive and piquant flavour . . . a matter of words and phrases as well as accent, which, incidentally, is nothing like any of the accents of Wales. I have already mentioned the Shady Motor Car Company in Bombay. I have also seen a Useless Engineering Company and, here and there, Ladies and Giants Tailors. Hindi phrase-books are pleasurable sources of a certain English as well as being guides to a vanished age. My own Hindi book offers *Your breastplate is dirty, the lock of your musket is rusty,* and *A sepoy shot himself.* Evidently the book would have been more use to Clive, Curzon and Kipling. *Dig a mine, wash the barrel, show me the cock,* it instructs. *Undress me, Are your bowels regular?* and *I had four motions.* And also, a reminder that the British were keen hangers, *He will be hanged tomorrow.* The word for executioner appears in a list of professions which also includes beggar, king, jester, slave, tyrant and mace-bearer.**

THE BOOKS OF *ready-made letters-for-all-occasions, for which there is much demand, are also enjoyable and instructive, covering almost every predicament. "I am very much sorry for the abusive language used by my son who has become a bit rustic on my negligence", goes an apology; and: "I did not ignore you in the street on purpose. Perhaps you are aware that my eyesight is not as good as it should be."*

A suggested off-the-peg letter to a soldier reads: "How do you face death-warranting situations during different campaigns? Is the feeling of death meaningful to you? May your spirits be always high and make you strong to strike hard whenever there is any infiltration over the border." A letter to a newly-married girl says: "You must have adjusted yourself in the family of your in-laws. Always give good impression and impact to them by your every action." To which the girl might reply: "They treat me just like their daughter. Really they are affectionate and fondling." Lovers are advised to write: "In spite of suffering pangs of love, we should commit our love daringly before our parents. How long can we hide true love from elders?" Slightly desperate swains are urged to copy out the words: "I am waiting to have a nap in your sweet bosom."

SOME INDIAN ENGLISH **has a period flavour. The bereaved are always *condoled* and the Prime Minister is always *felicitated* on her birthday. Boxing fans are described as *followers of the roped square*, and criminals, unless identified as *dacoits*, are called *miscreants*. Hooligans and the like are called *anti-social elements*. They are never caught by the police, always *nabbed*; just as political parties always *bag seats* in elections. Criminals still carry *swag* and detectives are called *sleuths*. Women take, not lovers, but *paramours* and may be referred to as *socialites*. *Eve-teasers* are young men who annoy girls; hence the frequent headline *COPS NAB EVE-TEASERS*. Criminals do not flee. They *abscond*. Accounts of bus crashes often conclude with the words *"The driver is absconding"*. This, incidentally, is unusually prudent, for a guilty driver in rural India runs the risk of being thrashed by survivors to within an inch of his death.**

Canvas shoes, which the British call plimsolls and the Americans sneakers, are known as *fleetfoots*. And a man puts on *wearunders* before putting on his trousers. He calls his rupees *bucks* or *chips* and when he talks of the ordinary people, the public, he speaks of *the common man*. If he is a government minister he does not fly—he *airdashes*.

In finding one's way about cities and buildings it is important to know *frontside* from *backside*, partly because taxi drivers are often unfamiliar with the area they work in, and one directs them by saying: *"Turn rightside, now leftside, here's backside."*

Trevor Fishlock
INDIA FILE *(1983)*

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rect idiomatic English, published what he termed a "Very Indian Poem in Indian English":

> *You are all knowing, friends,*
> *What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa,*
> *I don't mean only external sweetness*
> *But internal sweetness,*
> *Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling*
> *Even for no reason*
> *But simply because she is feeling . . . .*

There is, of course, an element of parody here, reminiscent of a performance by Peter Sellers. However, the poem also conveys the confidence of Indians capable of writing standard English but deliberately using English not for Western audiences but to talk to each other—drawing vigour from Indian life, and extending English, as James Joyce had done, to convey their own experiences and consciousness. Perhaps there is an advantage in this for readers in Britain. Graham Greene has said that it was through reading R. K. Narayan that he knew what it was like to be an Indian. Perhaps no one can write in depth about a foreign country; even E. M. Forster could only write about the effect India had on his own fellow-countrymen and -women.

IT IS MANIFEST that English with its variants has found a permanent place in India. There will always be a few who speak and write to the highest standards, with a full understanding of English literature and awareness of the historical and social contexts. These writers and scholars ask for no concessions. Many more will use English as a matter of convenience, for communicating across the country, keeping in touch with the outside world, and remaining abreast of developments in all fields. Indians find English sufficiently pliable to convey their own moods and approaches, and recourse to that language no longer suggests deracination or cultural displacement. There is no strong counterpart in India to the growing feeling in parts of Africa that writing in English is irrelevant to African culture. Plenty of Indian writers of talent and passion find English a language in which they can deal adequately with the special realities of their country. It may not always be Standard English; but alive it certainly is, and will continue to be.

Demand for knowledge of English will increase and, to cater for this (in addition to convents, international schools and private schools with English as the medium of instruction), the Government has begun to set up model secondary schools in every district, with teaching in both Hindi and English. Over 200 such schools have already opened; the rest are expected to start functioning within the next two years. If the scheme works well—and it is too early yet to say whether it will do so—this will ensure the spread of English to the rural areas and bring within its reach bright students who could not normally afford an English education. In the schools already established, nearly half the pupils are on scholarships and come from families with incomes below the poverty line.

The English language taught here is a language of comprehension, enabling students to read quickly, speak with facility, and write with accuracy rather than making them conversant with English history and literature. An effort is being made to move away from the British cultural background, to relate the English language to the Indian setting, and to concentrate on the learning process. Like the teaching of foreign languages in the European Economic Community, teachers of English in India are encouraged to attach greater importance to fluency than to proficiency in grammar; the main purpose of knowing English is to understand and be understood. In consequence, while Standard English is taught, the drift of the students is towards Indian English.

EVEN INDIAN ENGLISH is not, and can never be, the first language in India; no one expects that at any time in the future all the millions of Indian people will speak and write it. English will remain the pan-Indian language of the élite; it cannot function as a vehicle of mass culture. This in itself restricts the scope for growth, for English cannot develop in the ordinary circumstances of the day-to-day life of the common people.

The contrast is clear when one looks at the vitality of the regional languages—and it is these languages, the mother-tongues of the masses, which form the best media for primary as well as adult education. That a child is best taught at the start in its own language is now not disputed. Lord Bullock, in his 1975 report on education in Britain, stated this clearly: "No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold."

A language is most easily learnt when it is in tune with the social context. To teach an Indian child in English at the primary stage perpetuates a segregative system of education, strengthens distinctions of class and status, and warps the mind. Failure to resort to regional languages in literacy campaigns hampers their success. The oral tradition of learning is very strong in India, not in the limited sense of memorising texts, but in the broader tradition of transmitting epics, myth, and social meaning, with constant additions and amendments in tune with historical change. English cannot fit into this form of oral tradition. If priority is not given to regional languages at the primary and adult levels, one may well find by the year 2000 that, while those speaking English in India almost equal the total population of Britain, more than half of the world's illiterate population in the age-group of fifteen to nineteen will be in India.

English will continue to be spoken in the two Houses of Parliament and some legislatures in the states; but will gradually give way, as the main medium of Indian politics, to local languages. The natural culmination of democracy is general use of the mother-tongues. Paradoxically, however, even while English recedes as the language of politics, the question of language is cooling down as a political issue. Radio and even more so television are diffusing knowledge of English, Hindi, and the language of the area; they are achieving imperceptibly what governments and politicians have struggled in vain to do. But while the use of Hindi as a single official language for India has become a receding goal, its spread through the air and on the screen does not

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arouse aggressive antagonism. The basic Hindi, or Hindustani, spoken in films is gradually being understood throughout the country.

Nehru was right not to seek prompt and permanent solutions but to let events shape themselves. Political, economic, and social developments determine the spread or arrest of languages. So—as India moves pragmatically and quietly to greater use of the regional languages in democratic politics, primary education, and the battle against illiteracy—basic Hindi becomes more widely known in areas where it is not the mother-tongue, but does not oust English. Now that the languages no longer compete with each other, English comes into the picture as a compulsory second language at the stage of secondary education, and children come to its study with the added advantage of familiarity with their own language and literature.

Indians will continue to use English, in their own accents and idioms, as an additional official language, and as the language of higher education and advanced research. It will serve as a vehicle for transcultural understanding and as a catalytic agent for other Indian literatures; and it will remain the chief means for the growing middle class to communicate among themselves across India's vast expanses.

These possibilities need to be set in the wider context of the future of English in the world—and in Britain. We live more and more in a visual age. With computer programmes, cognitive revolutions, and artificial intelligence, non-verbal language may grow in significance. Young Indian film-makers already tend to rely more on images than on words; and recently a popular film has been made which dispenses almost wholly with a script. The silent movies are with us again.

In the United States, an organisation is campaigning to have English made the national language by amendment of the Constitution; the campaign is meeting with resistance. In Britain itself, now a multicultural society with a variety of ethnic groups—some of them speaking their mother-tongues, and each developing its own version of English—notions of British identity are changing; and standard English may itself suffer marked changes and its use contract. For, as the late Raymond Williams repeatedly pointed out, it is the spoken rather than the written language which is the real source of authority, and the other derives from it.

Who knows? Sometime in the next century a speaker in Cambridge may be struggling to deal with a different topic: "The English language in Britain—and its future role."

My Father's Pipe Case

I gave it to you on the morning
of your autumn birthday, the seventieth.

An empty pipe case, a long pouch
a rich dark brown suede. I hold it now.

The sigh of the zipper, gently sighing
as I close it, open it

reminds me of your own contentment,
your careful handling of that precious pipe,

its bowl so lovingly stoked, its walnut
and ebony stem so tenderly polished.

And as I open it once more, in trembling hands,
it sends me still the essence of your being

in this empty case, the vanished pipe,
the lingering aroma of Digger Plug.

Then I have to smile for you, thinking
I am the same age now as you were then.

James Kirkup

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Adam Zamoyski

States of Mind

On the Myths of National Identity

THE POLES ARE OFTEN compared with the Irish—their history, culture, and national characters are deemed to share so many features that they are generally lumped together in the British mind. On the face of it, this is a rather preposterous notion. One of the largest nations in Europe, with 800 years of sovereign status behind it—a nation that has known the experience of conquering others and ruling over them before being overcome itself—what can this nation truly have in common with a small island people which has never sought to impose its rule or influence over others, whose dominant experience is one of being conquered, downtrodden, and starved? The historian could sensibly rule out the whole proposition, and dismiss the cliché of common attributes—romantic self-destructiveness, excessive fondness for the bottle, inveterate hopelessness—with the contempt it deserves. But one cannot simply argue away the notion, for the cliché obscures some fundamental and intriguing truths.

These are not at all obvious, even to the intelligent observer. During a recent visit to Galway, I realised how easy it would be to come back to London and write the sort of interesting and competent "insight" piece that gets it all hopelessly wrong. I often find myself gently fuming as I read reports by journalists who have just returned from Warsaw; and many readers will have experienced the same sensation when reading, say, an analysis of the English class structure written by an American sociologist.

Most societies behave and utter in code, and unless one happens to have a smattering of that code, one is quite literally missing the point. It is tempting to fancy that one is beginning to crack the Irish code after reading James Joyce, Sean O'Faolain, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and others. But Roy Foster's wonderful new *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*[1] made me increasingly aware that they told one as much about the Irish as reading Adam Mickiewicz or Czeslaw Milosz reveals about the Poles—which is, frankly, not very much. Great writers too often create new myths and new codes in the process of delving into the old. As Roy Foster's book bears out, and as I have discovered in writing a history of Poland, one has to go back much further and dig far deeper.

When dealing with the history of their own country, people relish the diversity, the subtlety, the complexity; they seek to understand, infer, and extrapolate. When dealing with that of other peoples, they quite understandably look for a swift and satisfactory synthesis that can give them a working framework for writing about those countries in a more general context. Hence the clichés.

We know most countries through their state history, and our image of them is often a highly corporate one; in 1789 "the French" did this, and in 1914 "the Germans" did that. But in the case of countries like Ireland or Poland—where the state was, in one sense or another, non-existent for long periods—we have no such view: every Pole and every Irishman was doing his own thing. This, of course, makes the writing of an honest history hideously difficult, but the pleasure to be had from studying such societies is correspondingly immense. One spends more time looking at people than at events, and at social phenomena rather than at political programmes.

Roy Foster clearly revels in this, and his enjoyment is contagious—I for the first time began to understand aspects of Ireland that had been a closed book to me. I also, to my delight, discovered a great many similarities and parallels with my own subject; Poland. Not similarities of character or culture of the "two of a kind" theory, but parallels of predicament and similarities of reaction.

THE MOST OBVIOUS thing the two nations have in common is the outsider's view of them. Roy Foster cleverly traces the reactions of English travellers "who made it their business to be appalled" by what they saw in Ireland, and from the outset, skewed their own ability to understand.

> "These were the attitudes that presented English observers with a constant conundrum [writes Foster]. How could the Irish be both savage and subtle? Both warlike and lazy? At once evidently 'inferior', yet possessed of an

[1] *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. By R. F. FOSTER. Allen Lane, £18.85.

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ungovernable pride? Cowardly, yet of legendary fortitude in the face of death? Socially primitive, yet capable of complex litigation? They were dirty, lazy, dishonest and violent. Their laws were unethical and inequitable. Yet these 'corrupt customs' had invariably fascinated and drawn in the English who settled in Ireland, 'degenerating' them."

The same is true of French 18th-century travellers in Poland, who recounted with a frisson of horror tales of the "gothic" government and "oriental" manners of the wild people they had ventured among. Like English observers in Ireland, they "rapidly took refuge in the analysis of barbarism".

It is no less true of 19th-century German attitudes, which were also coloured by the fact that countless orderly and thrifty middle-class German functionaries, sent out to "civilise" areas of Poland absorbed into Germany, were themselves inexorably sucked into "Polishness". Obsessed with the idea of uniformity, the administrators "could not stomach this complex, intuitive and protean way of life", while the colonisers all too often gave in to it. The English policy of Plantation in Ireland was as slowly but surely defeated and turned on its head by native cunning as were the ingeniously unimaginative schemes for colonisation in Poznania dreamt up by Bismarck and viciously enforced by the shaven-necked Junkers of the *Deutscher Ostmark Verein*.

NATIVE RESPONSE to the attitudes of outsiders was predictably similar—a certain amused contempt for the "clever" fools who came to impose their own order, but were so trussed up in their cultural and intellectual superiority that they could not cope with the life-forces around them. Spiritual self-defence mechanisms in both cases followed an almost identical pattern. From the 17th century onwards, the historiography and poetry of both the Polish and the Irish nations represent them as Israelites, persecuted but chosen, overwhelmed by insuperable odds yet triumphing in the wider, spiritual, context. If you do not want to face up to defeat, you can always claim a victory.

But such victories carry a heavy cost, and the fallen assume unique importance. The dead of the Boyne, the heroes of Easter 1916, the victims of Katyn, or the doomed insurgents of Warsaw in 1944 are remembered and revered a thousand times more urgently than the British casualties of Waterloo or Alamein. They continue to exert, in Foster's felicitous phrase, "a tyranny of the dead" over the living.

In Ireland, this tyranny came to dominate attitudes early on. Patrick Henry Pearse's "Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriotic men and women spring living nations", and O'Donovan Rossa's "Without the shedding of blood there is no redemption" flow directly from this mausoleum mentality. But if the Irish turned it into a shibboleth of political life, the Polish poets of the 19th century turned it into a religion. Their version of the nation's messianic role suggested that its very suffering and immolation were to be cherished, for they represented a crucifixion through which the world would be redeemed. When reality becomes unacceptable, people create another reality.

This life beyond reality is neatly reflected in the physical parallel of nations living outside their own country. In both cases, part of the nation's life has gone on through the doings of political émigrés in France or elsewhere, of soldiers serving in other armies but always fighting for Ireland in the Low Countries during the Thirty Years War, or for Poland in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars and in Britain in 1940. In times of revolt or insurrection, however, the mother country waits in vain for this outside help, which never quite materialises; and there remains in a very real sense an Ireland outside Ireland, a Poland outside Poland.

This "external country" took on deeper significance in the 19th century, when mass emigration set up expatriate populations of such magnitude that they began to have an economic and sociological influence on the communities at home. By 1890, there were some three million Irish people abroad—representing 39% of all those born in Ireland who were alive at the time. Although the proportions were not nearly as dramatic, well over that number of Poles were also living abroad, and the consequences for the mother country were just as weighty.

Putting it bluntly, emigration stems development. In Poland as in Ireland, emigration was mostly born of the need to preserve the small family farm, which could only survive if younger sons and daughters gave up their claim and went away; these emigrants then sent cash to help the family back home. The scale of such remittances is staggering. Roy Foster estimates that some £34 million was sent to Ireland from the United States between 1848 and 1867. During the early 1900s, an estimated $50 million was annually flowing into Galicia from its emigrants in the Chicago canneries or the rubber-plantations of the Amazon. These remittances put off the need for agricultural modernisation, and the family farm remained in exactly the same mess it had been in a century earlier.

At the same time, emigration siphoned off the most vital and disruptive element in the rural community, thereby reinforcing—or at least preserving—the rural ethos, conservatism, and religious conformity. By removing the element which would otherwise have gone to work in factories, indeed would have created the conditions and the need for factories, emigration slowed down the process of industrialisation. In very tangible ways it permitted those left behind to perpetuate archaic patterns of life, while the remittances helped to create a continuing sense of dependence on outside help. There are certainly lessons here for Third-World countries today. Such help allows populations to survive, but does not enrich countries; subsidies of this sort, however large, should never be confused with investment.

IN LESS TANGIBLE WAYS, the phenomenon of emigration exerts a powerful influence on the way the nation as a whole sees itself. If those left behind find themselves escaping

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from reality into messianic notions and visions of deliverance from outside, those who have emigrated tend to reverse the process. Stranded in an alien environment, surrounded by rival communities of emigrants from other countries, and usually transplanted from an agrarian culture into a heavily industrialised urban jungle such as Cleveland or Detroit, they dream of escape. And escape takes the form of identification with a hazy idea of the purity, the imagined idyll, of "life in the old country". This vision of the "ideal" nature of life back home, which is completely at variance with the physical conditions, filters back to create a nebulous myth of spiritual perfection that floats uneasily but persistently over the dismal reality.

The phenomenon had a marked effect on the attitudes which created modern Ireland. Nostalgic longings of the emigrants were reflected in and fuelled the Gaelic revivalism at home that was itself a Romantic rejection of reality: the muddled ideal of the thatched cottage sprang as much from anti-materialistic feelings bred on the streets of New York as from the cultural Anglophobia burgeoning in Dublin. And this was as important to the emigrant seeking to define his identity in the new world as it was to the Irish intelligentsia in "the old country" in the 1890s. In Poland—a notoriously "noble" culture, if gauged by the aspirations of even its most humble denizens—the thatched cottage is replaced by "the little white manor-house", repository of all bucolic virtues and Polish values. The dream of every Pole made good in the new world still revolves round such a dwelling, with its homely but noble columns, porch and pediment. And it is still the emigrant who reinforces Polish cultural Russo- and Germanophobia, often misunderstanding the real problems faced by those at home.

THE EFFECT OF image and myth on nations and their leaders can be immense, and is seldom beneficial. It often produces comic situations, but it can also lead to tragedy. The most obvious example is pre-War Germany, where a distasteful stew of half-cooked myths, laced with "scientific" gravy, produced a spasm of irrational aggression; Europe has still not recovered from its effects half a century later. Nothing quite so apocalyptic has ever attended Irish national dreams. They have nevertheless been highly destructive and continue to weigh on the country, impeding its evolution and condemning it to endlessly rehearse the canons of its own inadequacy. This may sound excessively harsh, but I believe it to be true, as it is in some ways of Poland.

"One would think", noted a French traveller in the 18th century, "on so small an island, an Irishman would be an Irishman: yet it is not so." One of the most fascinating and attractive things about Ireland is the rich diversity created by layer upon layer of new arrivals, criss-crossed by cultural, religious, and later political furrows. Yet those who fought to create the modern Irish state have been remarkably unwilling to accept this diversity. And it is largely this unwillingness that lies at the root of the island's problems.

In the 18th century, even the latest tier of English interlopers—the Ascendancy—regarded themselves as colonials; and they produced their own brand of Irish patriotism. It was the Presbyterian tradition of libertarian republicanism, emanating principally from Belfast, that took the lead in creating links with revolutionary America and France. Both Dublin and Belfast were pro-American in the 1770s, and pro-French in the 1790s. The image of "the green bough" that grew in America, budded in France, and was to be planted in "the crown of Great Britain" by way of Ireland, was a vision of a political and cultural mission worthy of the hybrid nation, with its multifarious links to the outside world.

Reading of this period, one has a harrowing feeling of opportunities lost and promise betrayed. For, by the end of the century, the United Irishmen had managed to argue the Irish question into a corner: in Wolfe Tone's view, all ills could be traced back to the English connection. Geopolitically, Ireland turned from a crossroads into a dead end as internationalist liberals became nationalist bigots. The cornerstone of their faith—that England was the root cause of all evil—as well as being a shaky proposition, virtually condemned the country to civil war in the long run.

A false premise such as this has a tendency to ramify in the political arena, where violence rather than compromise is the usual way out of a blind alley. During the 19th century, Irish nationalists continued to level their guns at British administrations which were becoming increasingly sympathetic to their cause. They thereby distracted attention from, and failed to address, the real problem facing them —which was still that of Ireland's diversity.

As the Young Ireland movement struggled to define "Irishness", it clutched at increasingly mythical notions of *volk*. By leaning more and more heavily on perceptions of the Gaelic and Catholic nature of "the true Ireland", they managed to unite one segment of the population by giving it a largely spurious identity, alienating in the process those Irishmen who were neither Gaelic nor Catholic in origin. By the 1890s, these, who made up the majority of the population of Ulster, were made to feel that those who were striving to create the new Ireland did not consider them to be true Irishmen. This only confirmed them in their worst prejudices and consolidated their resistance to the creation of a state in which they would be, in one sense at least, non-citizens. The nationalists relentlessly ignored this aspect of the matter. The inevitable consequence was that while a liberal government at Westminster longed to give Home Rule to Ireland, the Irish of Ulster did everything in their power to block it. When the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921, the Irish of Ulster insisted on remaining part of Britain, a country which did not disown them. The catastrophic and absurd result was partition.

NOBODY COULD PRETEND that the Ulstermen were victims in this process, or that the issue was as simple as this, or that the British Government did not make a frightful mess of things. And nobody would blame the Irish nationalists for taking the course they did. The fact remains that a jumble of folkloric myth, sectarian bigotry, and political reliance on anti-British feeling to forge the national con-

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sciousness, keep the national identity alive, and promote solidarity, produced a failure to recognise the real enemy.

This was not, in 1912 or 1921 any more than it is today, the British Army, but the state of mind of the people of Ulster. And the nastiest aspects of that state of mind evolved in reaction to the largely pointless rhetoric coming from the nationalists.

Irishmen from both sides of the border might benefit from a look at certain aspects of Polish history. The Polish Commonwealth of the 16th century was even more diverse than Ireland, containing people of Polish, Ruthene, Lithuanian, Jewish, Tartar, Armenian, German, Baltic, and Italian stock—not to mention the largest expatriate community of Scots in the world. These people brought with them half-a-dozen different religions, which fragmented into another half-a-dozen sects between which there was a significant degree of movement. All considered themselves (and were considered, within the limitations imposed by the social structures of the day) to be Polish citizens.

Yet in the 17th century the idea was fostered, mainly by the Jesuits, that to be Polish was to be Catholic. The idea caught on, excluding those whose ethnic origins tied them to a different faith from the community of Polishness. A Tartar who became a Catholic was a Pole, but a Ruthene who stuck to Orthodoxy became a foreigner. Exclusion bred resentment; resentment bred a siege mentality; and 200 years later the Poles were astonished to discover that the Ruthenes of Malopolska wanted to have their own Ukrainian state rather than live in a Polish one. The struggles between Poles and Ukrainians over Lwow in 1919, and the uneasy peace punctuated by terrorist acts over the next 20 years bear a sometimes uncanny resemblance to events in Ulster.

The Polish experience was more complex, in that the Poles knew oppression from both sides. When they were downtrodden they could think back to a time when they were the rulers. This dictated a less strident approach to the question of allegiance, which was in itself more clear-cut. In Ireland the intentions of "the oppressor" were fundamentally benevolent after the 17th century; in Poland they were brutally malevolent. Brutality attended the maintenance in Ireland of an order which may not have been sympathetic, or even acceptable to most of the population, but which was not actually designed to extirpate, let alone exterminate them. Russian and German policies in Poland oscillated between (at best) the nastier sort of thing the English did in Ireland, and (at worst) cultural and physical annihilation.

Thus there was never any need to instruct the Polish people in the fact that the Germans were an enemy to be resisted—the accent was on survival, and on fostering essential qualities which differentiated the Poles from their oppressors. The struggle for nationhood was less political than in Ireland; it was both more physical and more ideological, and therefore more flexible and more generous. While a Catholic Irish landowner working for constitutional reform could be branded as a collaborator and have his house burnt down, the Polish nobility, even when they did nothing for the cause, benefited from the fact that they too were theoretically oppressed, and were included within the bounds of national solidarity. What makes so much of Irish history so bloody is the fact that most of the wars and disturbances that punctuate it were in effect civil wars, and these always engender cruelty on a particularly intimate scale.

This does not mean that the Poles did not indulge in some equally silly mythologising. They too were overcome by vapours of xenophobia, emanating from spurious theories of what it was to be Polish. They too sloshed their way through a bog of genius-of-the-nation folksiness. The whole of the 19th century sometimes seems to be one long argument about the nature of Polishness. But in this area the different national characters are very much in evidence.

The Polish argument was carried on with hardly any internal bloodletting. It seems remarkably polite next to the rhetoric of vengeance that characterises the Irish disputes, and the occasional eruption of half-hearted and soon forgotten vehemence contrasts with what Roy Foster calls "the pornography of violence" over which Irish nationalists liked to masturbate. The Galician *jacquerie* of 1846—which could easily be explained away as an incubus of Metternich's system, and seems unremarkable by Irish standards—mesmerised Polish society by its bloodiness for generations. Even in the darkened basement in which they planned their next assassination or train-robbery, the men of Josef Pilsudski's fighting squads or those of the Home Army's sabotage units never forgot for long the constitutional niceties of the parliamentary system which, five centuries earlier, their ancestors had created and lived by.

This, however, did not help them much when the promised land was finally theirs. For peoples who have dreamt of it for centuries, the day of liberation is bound to be a disappointment. Roy Foster quotes an Irish bishop who observed that "Our version of history has tended to make us think of freedom as an end in itself and of independent government—like marriage in a fairy-story—as the solution of all ills." Poland had, of course, known marriage before, but the experience was not helpful. Its children still left home—suggesting not only that poverty continued, but, what was worse, that the family atmosphere was stifling. The "Babylonian exile" theory of why people emigrated in their millions, traditionally blaming everything on the oppressor, crumbled. Many other social ills naively attributed to oppression continued unabated. People continued to suffer. The panacea of liberty was revealed to be mendacious.

COMING TO TERMS with reality is not easy. In the case of people with a rich and complex historical baggage of escapist culture, it is also a moment of facing up to oneself, a coming of age, almost a spiritual crisis. Honesty does not come easily at moments such as these, and nations are reluctant to jettison the myths and artifices which served them so well in the struggle for independence.

Ireland and Poland were both unlucky in that they achieved this moment just after the Great War. They had to build a state apparatus and an economy, a constitutional system and a political culture, at a time when Europe was

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going through possibly the greatest economic, social, and ideological upheaval in modern history. These fledgling countries had to learn to run themselves in a climate of slumps and depressions, of mass movements such as Communism and Fascism, of religious and social decay, and of a general sense of doom. (Israel, an obvious comparison, had it much easier by being born after World War II.)

While Ireland, like Poland, coped remarkably well in the circumstances, it did not evolve in a way commensurate with its remarkable position. It looked after the physical needs of its citizens but failed to give the country a sense of direction. Neutrality in World War II marginalised Ireland, and deepened the rift separating Ulster from the Irish Republic. Although the Republic managed to make its presence felt—through, for instance, the United Nations—it did not assume a strong international personality beyond that of the tourist posters. Membership of the European Community has brought wealth, but whether this has done more good than the remittances of the previous century is arguable. The tourist industry, such a godsend in many ways, has certainly done much harm in creating an image of bland friendliness, lovable inefficiency, and cheeky roguishness, while the advertising industry, as Foster points out, "sold Ireland as energetically and unrealistically as any 17th-century plantation promoter".

When visiting Ireland, one wonders whether bits of the mask have not stuck to the face; the image certainly seems to have affected, and trivialised, the way in which many Irish people look at themselves. Irish historians since the 1940s have, as Foster says, been at pains to re-evaluate and to ask difficult questions, but this has hardly affected the popular version of Irish history clung to by the public mind. Here, amnesia is cultivated on a staggering scale, allowing the persistence of a negative and sectarian consensus. True consensus, as the case of Poland has so powerfully demonstrated, comes from facing up to the most unpleasant questions.

The respective situations of Poland and Ireland are now more different than ever, and nobody could be blamed for maintaining that there is no useful purpose to be served by comparing them. I am not so sure. The similarities of experience through which both peoples have been put have left a lasting psychological mark, and will continue to have an influence on the way they think. The dusty old baggage of struggle was built to last; it is full of notions conceived to provide solace and escape, which remain very tempting to anyone faced by an intractable problem. The Irishmen I have met do not like talking about Ulster; if one broaches the matter, they sheepishly take refuge in platitudes, and explanations which they know to be untrue. It is not just that some of the truth about Ulster is uncomfortable to both sides, but that any serious discussion of the problem involves a re-evaluation of their whole view of Irish history—and, with it, their view of themselves.

The Poles, too, are burdened with their old baggage, into which they like to delve in moments of anxiety. But if a great deal more soul-searching will have to go on before Polish society can divest itself of this habit, the shocks it has received since 1939 have at least shattered any complacency. The last ten years have seen a remarkable effort by the intelligentsia to address painful topics, to question the righteousness of Polish doings in the past, the relationship with the Ukrainians and the Jews, and the rigidities which frame the accepted patriotic view. Society as a whole has shown an almost obsessive interest in examining the past and finding out what really happened.

EVERY PAGE OF Roy Foster's book on Ireland brings to mind analogies not just with Poland, but with all nations which feel obliged in one way or another to justify their own existence. What these nations ultimately have in common is a protracted crisis of confidence, the result of a confused consciousness. Poles are constantly asking themselves what a Pole is, what Poland is: a concept, a nation, a state of mind, or just a myth?

The same questions are never far from the Irish subconscious. One theme recurs through Foster's book:

> ". . . the concept of being 'more' or 'less' Irish than one's neighbour; Irishness as a scale or spectrum rather than a simple national, or residential, qualification; at worst, Irishness as a matter of aggressively displayed credentials."

As 1992 approaches, when the barriers within "Europe" are to fall, the Irish must face up to the fact that partition will cease to exist in physical terms, and that it is up to them as a society whether it continues in effect. The simultaneous cracking up of the Soviet order in Central Europe faces the Poles with the (very distant) possibility of being allowed to re-enter the free world; and it is equally up to them as a society whether they can see themselves and behave as free people, and shed the need for blaming everything on history. In both cases, the absolute crux of the matter, and the only firm basis for a better future, lies in honest re-evaluations of the past.

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Peter Porter

Wish We Were There

It would be our garden of scents and Spitfires,
it would be our yard for exercise,
it would go on forever (and ever),
it would, of course, be Paradise.

And be fitted like a German kitchen,
every pleasantness at eye-level,
the cats on their curly yellow cat-mat
unequivocally of the Devil.

Mother and Father in frayed straw hats
and swathes of angelic flannelette,
the nimbus of childhood spreading wider,
the milkman trying to place a bet.

Getting old would be growing younger
as the CDs turn at 78
and Haydn's No. 97
provides a coda for Beethoven's Eighth.

The pet dogs buried by the roses
should rise from the limed and clayey soil
and the Council steam-roller driver
bring belated tears to the boil.

The post come twice a day from Youville
with letters of triumphant love—
you and Joseph on the river,
you with Fyodor by the stove.

And there too Indestructible Man
would keep death lurking by each bush,
clipping and pruning tirelessly,
the old lawn-mower hard to push.

The voice of friendship calling up,
can you come down today to play
so time shall not move round the dial
and after-breakfast last all day.

The macaronic air refresh us,
taking pity on a poor linguist
till it's Pentecost, and Schubert's Miller
takes his withered flowers for grist.

The end is nigh but will not happen
as tea appears on the lawn—
the synchronicity of Heaven
is owed to us for being born.

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A Bunch of Fives

(For Kit Wright)

Caveat emptor! or buyer, be choosy.
Buyer, be choosy and hope to be saved.
Hope, to be saved, must last to the end.
Last to the end is the cringe of the slave.
Cringe, be enslaved, but get your Jacuzzi.

Time was the *Greens* were a team
of vicious charioteers. Now the colour
stands for everything the liberal soul
most desires to save. That whales may roll
through Haydn, the Emperor must dream.

Shakespeare on original instruments!
Bear-baiters' breath, the Walsingham snivel,
Jack Cade's diphthongs, Douai's Jesuit screams,
boy choristers' simpers, the King's dribble:
an end to RADA decadence.

With cognate syntax, you're too far in
already, so Lichtenberg thought.
Every aphorism should abort.
Those are words you're playing about with,
you won't piss wine or grow a fin.

The poet Alec Hope has a building
named after him. Birds comes to the living
poet's window every day. They grow
accustomed to him. He says: "I don't know
what they eat, but they'll drink anything."

Rhyme's coming back. Hooray! Hooray!
And stanza and metre and narrative.
Our old hack, metaphor, is blooming
but under the dressage and the grooming
trot the spavined nags of yesterday.

Mallarmé was wrong. Poetry is made
of intervals, the spaces between words.
My Collected Works are all the white
of all the pages I shall ever write,
my First and most victorious Crusade.

Here's my crack at Zen. Existence
is the notation of an untranscribable
melody. Art is the incandescence
when you pass the current of the present
through the past's resistance. And then?

My mind is like a bookshop chock-a-block
with weighty, plate-filled tomes, all listed as
Porteriana. Customers reconnoitre
for pornography; they loiter,
fingering, not purchasing the stock.

Then, as they say, it all became a blur.
I woke in Eden and it was dark,
I had become my double; there we were,
the carnivore listening to Bach,
the gentle, vegetarian murderer.

Why do libraries fill me with unease?
They make me think of God the Great Curator
whose mind stores all atrocities that were
and every death which has yet to occur.
Churches are better, the dead there are at peace.

Music begins where words end
(Goethe). But he didn't like the sound
composers added to his words.
His place was on the ground,
the point from which the larks ascend.

Planet Earth now boarding through Gate One,
everyone aboard! So these are who
you're flying with, an unimpressive bunch
to find yourself among. Cabin Crew,
doors to manual. The Sun! The Sun!

I woke from my dream, crying.
It had been so beautiful,
love personified.
Earlier, I'd been terrified.
Both dreams had the taste of dying.

I stand outside the prodigal's door,
on my own now, my one good angel gone
back to the canton where sun never shone.
O shattering of jugs, O tears unfurled,
I leave the world and am young once more.

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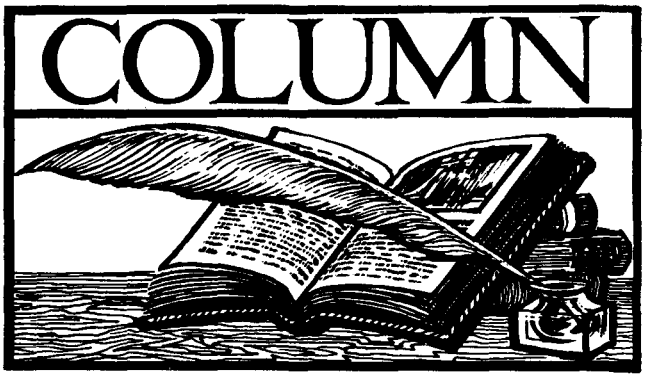

I WAS SITTING in my office, trying to figure out why a paper-clip never quite bends back into a straight piece of wire. However hard you work at it, you end up with kinks. Like most of my clients, I thought.

The glass pane in the door shivered. There was someone in the outer office. "In here", I called. It was no use pretending to be my own secretary. In the suit I was wearing, I'd never have held down the job.

The door opened and the visitor stepped in, as if uncertain this was the right address. It wasn't a dumb heavyweight with two-tone shoes and hands like over-ripe bananas. It wasn't a grifter in a wide-brimmed fedora and a silk suit that had the garment workers demanding ear-muffs. It wasn't a cool blonde with a wicked promise in her eye and a pearl-handled threat in her purse. Especially it wasn't a cool blonde.

It was a professor. At least, that's how I rated him. Above the waist he was all grizzled hair and gold-rimmed spectacles, with the bowl of a brier pipe hooked in the front pocket of his green tweed sports-coat, over a tan cotton shirt and a matching knitted tie. Below the waist he wore jeans and scuffed sneakers.

"Er, Mr Marlowe?" The voice was Boston, Mass., with a touch of Oxford, England.

"In person. What's on your mind?"

He peered round the room as if in disbelief, then out the window at L.A.'s aluminum sky.

"Take a pew." The tweed and the accent were getting to me.

He perched on the edge of the visitor's chair and leaned forward, eyes flicking from side to side.

"It's, er, rather a delicate matter, and I don't quite know, er, where to begin."

"It always is and they never do. Just give it to me straight."

"Very well. My name is Grockle, Willard Grockle. I teach Humanities and Communication Studies at Cynara University up beyond Beverly Hills. We're a small private college. We specialise in students with, er, unusual needs and qualities—those whom, er, larger establishments tend perhaps to, er, neglect."

In the hesitation stakes, he was going for a gold. I reckoned I knew why. The outfit he worked for was a classy haven for academic no-hopers whose parents were rich enough to buy them B.A. degrees.

"So what's the beef?"

"It's our new Dean, Mr Marlowe. He's—he's wrecking the Faculty."

"Cancelling tenure?"

"No, no. Well, not yet. It's the new courses he's imposed on us. 'Popular Literature'—'Structuralism and the Six-gun'—'Deconstructing Detective Fiction'. And I used to think my Communication Studies were rather daringly innovative. But this! This is idolising trash."

"Take it easy, Prof. There's a guy I know called Chandler who gets kinda sore if he hears that word. And when he gets mad, I get even."

"Please, Mr Marlowe. I already teach Raymond Chandler's work. I show my students the difference between the early magazine stories and the novels that cannibalised their plots. I point out the, er, over-ambition of *The Long Goodbye*, and the way that *Playback* verges on—well, sentimentality. I try to . . . ."

He stopped when he saw the ·45 in my hand.

"Listen, Grockle. The guy's wife had died. He owed himself something. I'd like to see you come on tough if your world had fallen apart."

"Mr Marlowe. You misunderstand me. Please put that thing away. I have great respect for Chandler. All I meant was that one must analyse, discriminate, evaluate. In its genre, his work is literature. Art. But the Dean! Would you believe it? He wants me to run a course on . . . Mickey Spillane."

"Okay, Prof., I'll take the case. Lead me to Cynara."

GIANT SPRINKLERS were lashing the nibbled lawns of the campus, but the desert sun was winning. We drove through a wrought-iron gateway with a Latin motto picked out in gold. I caught the word "*studium*" in it somewhere. Behind a gravelled forecourt stood a gray stone building, University Gothic style.

I followed Grockle under an archway aiming stone spikes at us, then down a corridor to a room like a church hall. It had pine benches, and tables lit by green globes. Twenty or thirty students were bent over books, some of them taking notes. The only sound was the insect-buzz of their personal stereos.

"Our Hall of Study." In this hushed atmosphere, Grockle's best friend was his mutter. "But just you look at the texts they're studying."

Tiptoeing down the rows, I looked. *I The Jury. Goldfinger.* Enid Blyton. Dorothy L. Sayers. Barbara Cartland. Comic books. Women's magazines.

"And that's a college education?"

"I'm afraid so. But now shall we go and see the Dean?"

He led me down another corridor, carpeted this time in thick pile the color of apricot ice-cream. From a room marked "Beethoven" came the sound of rock-and-roll.

The Dean's secretary was a dark-haired woman of forty or so in a clinging oatmeal sheath, running to fat but not sprinting, with lazy, speculative dark eyes.

"Why, Professor Grockle." Her Southern drawl made it an aria.

"Rebecca, this is Mr Marlowe. A prospective parent. Does the Dean have a moment right now?"

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Rebecca crooned to the intercom, and a man's voice said "Sure".

The Dean sprang up to greet us with the showy energy of someone feeling his age. Some ten years younger than Grockle, he had a tanned, unlined face, but tired eyes. He wore a beige safari suit with an apple-green scarf at the neck.

After the introductions, I played the inquiring father.

"This Popular Literature course. Does it do the kids any good? Don't they read that stuff anyway in their spare time?"

"Not the way we teach it at Cynara, Mr Marlowe. If they read at all. Some of our students suffer from TV-induced dyslexia. So our job is to wean them towards books."

"Yeah, comic books. Okay, I know they're big with the Paris intelligentsia. But we're talking college kids here. Why not Jane Austen instead of Mickey Spillane?"

"We have to start where they're at, Mr Marlowe. And frankly I'm not surprised they show little interest in archaic bourgeois courtship rituals in late 18th-century provincial England. It's we who need what one scholar has called 'a form of deconditioning, a release from these culturally induced reflex rejections into a capacity to undertake, without embarrassment, the dispassionate analysis of Spillane'."[1]

"So you get them reading garbage. What then?"

"Then—for the moment—there comes a parting of the ways. There are those [nodding towards Grockle] who still maintain that popular fiction is assembly-line entertainment for the masses, and therefore to be despised. Others, less élitist and reactionary, believe that we should eschew traditional value judgments and seek rather the implications and hidden assumptions of the text. We may find that some popular literature is conservative, sexist, class-ridden, or what you will. We may also find some that validly embodies dreams and aspirations, as folk-tales and fairy-tales do."

"You sound pretty élitist yourself, Dean."

"Certainly not. I believe in market forces. Let me read you a passage from another colleague, Leslie Fiedler.

> "The bourgeoisie were blinded by obsolescent mythologies of Art. . . . They thought of literary 'survival' . . . as the result of critical consensus rather than the workings of the market-place. . . . They appointed "experts" to prepare themselves by the study of the Classics, and to tell them . . . whether novels were O.K. in general; and if so, which were more O.K. than others.
>
> Obviously, they did not always take the good advice they sought. Quite often, in fact, they continued to read what their critical mentors had taught them to regard as 'trash'—defiantly in the case of sentimental-pious 'trash', shamefacedly and secretly in the case of pornographic 'trash'. But they did snatch such work from the hands of their children.'"[2]

"And you're handing it back to them—is that right, Dean? You sound like a preacher in a whore-house. First you sneer at literary standards, then you admit to feeling guilty when you read garbage under the blankets. And you encourage kids to take it seriously. Do you also peddle crack?"

"That will do, Mr Marlowe. I'm sure there are plenty of other institutions that will be glad to take your children. Penal institutions, for all I care. And, now, if you'll excuse me, Professor Grockle and I have serious matters to discuss."

"Finishing your Reader's Guide to *Kiss Me Deadly*? Okay, Dean, I'll beat it. But if you get on to Chandler I may be back."

I KNEW there was something wrong when I saw the door of my outer office not quite closed. The buzzer had died on me some years back, but it still had a latch and a lock. I'd checked them when I left with Grockle. As I pushed the door slowly open my scalp began to crawl.

Lightning split my skull and I pitched forward into a deep dark pool.

I seemed to be swimming on a cold ocean floor. It was hard against my ribs and it smelt of dust. My head felt like a painful tenderised steak.

"Get up, Marlowe." The voice was familiar. Had I said that? I shook my head. This was a bad mistake. Precarious

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Published quarterly in March, June, September and December.

[1] *The Study of Popular Fiction: A Source Book*. By BOB ASHLEY. Pinter, £27.50, paper £7.95.

[2] *The Study of Popular Fiction*, p. 12.

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as a cripple on a high-wire, I got on my hands and knees and stood up.

What I saw nearly knocked me down again. The office was full of people, twenty or more of them. And they all looked like me. Same face, same stubble, same unsecretarial suit. It was like a mirror-maze, with Marlowe clones staring at me whichever way I turned.

Then the voices began. "Sorry, I thought you were another guy." "Sorry . . . ." Rasping and interrupting, talking over each other, all the same, all subtly different, they made a counterpoint chorus, a Marlowe madrigal. They were all almost my own.

I'd heard of split personalities, but this was ridiculous.

"Shut up!"

In the silence, my head cleared. They were Marlowe lookalikes, not Marlowe clones. Not even the suits were identical. Some were even shabbier than mine.

"Who are you? Actors? And who hired you? It's time for the curtain call."

They hadn't seen my ·45 when they sapped me, but they could see it now. They looked embarrassed. Then Willard Grockle came into the outer office.

"Forgive me, Mr Marlowe. I'd not anticipated violence."

"So what did you anticipate? Twelve-a-side tiddlywinks? And who thought up the Bring-on-the-clones routine?"

"It was a colleague, Byron Preiss. He wanted to celebrate Raymond Chandler's centenary in 1988. So with the estate's permission he got 23 mystery writers to write pastiche Marlowe stories, adding a last one from Chandler himself. I consider them masterly—especially those by Jonathan Valin and Simon Brett."[3]

"Not so fast, gentlemen." The Dean had come through the doorway, and he had Rebecca on his arm. "Mr Marlowe here claims to despise what he calls pulp fiction. He wants his children to be reared on Jane Austen. A likely story. But it surely implies that Chandler, in his view, is a cut above so-called 'trash'. Yet if Chandler was an Artist, to use that outmoded term, how come that so many mystery writers can churn out undetectable facsimiles? Tell me that, Professor Grockle. Or rather, Professor Emeritus. I have appointed Rebecca to your Chair. She wrote her thesis on Spillane."

"You filthy swine!" Grockle's accent was more Oxford than ever. But there was a Luger in his fist. It barked twice.

The Dean and Rebecca looked startled. Their knees buckled, and they slid slowly to the floor. There were twin smears of blood on the wall behind them, like failed graffiti left by a somnolent drunk.

The Marlowe doubles didn't stir a muscle. Actors stick to the chalk marks, I guess.

"Drop the gun, Grockle. This ·45 would punch a hole in a rhinoceros. I'll have to turn you in, but I think the judge'll be lenient. You did a useful academic job."

"Will they let me read in prison, Mr Marlowe?"

"Sure thing, Prof. Chandler's big in Sacramento. But keep in with the Governor. It's literary theory and Popular Fiction in the punishment block."

The last I saw of Willard Grockle, he was sitting at my desk waiting for the collar, trying to bend a paper-clip straight. I should have told him there'll always be kinks.

M

[3] *Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe: A Celebration*. Edited by Byron Preiss. Bloomsbury, £7.99.

Dirge

Wind dies
in the chimney.
Birds
pretend to fly.

The cypress
—that rolled umbrella—
is the only
tree.

Days limp by,
slippered gaffers
gone at the crotch.
Don't look, they say—

don't look
at this open gaol
with the key
of clay.

Geoffrey Holloway

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Anatomy of the Republic

On Bryce's Americans—By D. F. SHAUGHNESSY

FOR 40 YEARS, after its publication in 1888, the three volumes of James Bryce's *The American Commonwealth* were mandatory reading at most colleges and universities throughout the United States. Even as late as 1955 the work regularly appeared on "Suggested Reading" lists. Today it would be difficult to find a faculty member, let alone a student, who has more than dipped into it.

When *The American Commonwealth* first appeared, it sold extremely well both in the United States and in Great Britain, but for different reasons. For Americans, it was the first book to explain—often in excessive detail—the Federal court system, the role of political parties, the workings of nominating conventions, and other governmental matters. Nothing approaching it for analysis and thoroughness had been printed before.

In Britain, it had a profound influence on the governing classes' notions about America. Bryce had pinpointed those characteristics that made the United States a "foreign" country; yet he confirmed the prevailing belief that it was still bound to Britain by ties of race and tradition, and remained a daughter country—at most a dominion gone wrong.

Bryce swiftly became famous in both countries. In the United States his renown was at first restricted to a small circle of academics but, as excerpts in popular journals were followed by newspaper reports and editorial comment, his fame spread more widely.

In the 60 years prior to the appearance of *The American Commonwealth*, close to 100 books had been written by visiting English men and women on American habits, customs and mores. Denigrating reports by Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens set the style that was to be followed by nearly all the others (ridiculing the American people was a major growth-sector in British publishing during most of the 19th century). Bryce was the first to break this mould, and to set new standards.

James Bryce, born in Belfast in 1838, moved with his family to Glasgow where his father was principal of a high school; he went up to Trinity College, Oxford, in 1857. There he soon came under the influence of the distinguished constitutional lawyer Edward Freeman and the historian Goldwin Smith; he did most of his reading in history and the classics. When he graduated, he had won almost every student prize and honour available. Shortly afterwards, he became a lecturer in law at Oriel College, Oxford.

It can safely be said that Bryce was a late-bloomer: he was, in fact, nearly seventy when he found the one job for which he was perfectly qualified and which he could do better than anyone else. He had taught at Oxford for nearly 30 years, and had published over 100 articles and a dozen books, yet he had not become a first-rate historian. Elected to Parliament in 1880, he remained there for more than 25 years but was never "a House of Commons man". His speeches were didactic, filled with extraneous detail; almost every assertion quickly collapsed under the weight of the qualifications he heaped on it. Even as a member of the Cabinet his colleagues thought him a bit of a joke, though they stood in awe of his industry, energy and knowledge.

BRYCE WAS APPOINTED British Ambassador to the United States in 1907—an appointment that came about partly because of his support for Home Rule in Ireland (a position which most Americans supported) but mainly because of his book's overwhelming popularity. The next six years proved to be the high point of his long career. Never before—or since—has Britain sent a better Ambassador to America. Everything he had done up to that time seemed to be a preparation for his new job. He was a perfect example of the right man in the right place and at the right time.

The years during which Bryce served in Washington were not the most harmonious in the long Anglo-American relationship, and his profound knowledge of American institutions, traditions, and customs often stood him in good stead. He seemed to have a bottomless reservoir of energy, rarely turning down an invitation to address a bar association, a church group, or a university gathering, and he travelled extensively throughout the country. Miners, railway conductors and policemen who did not know the name of their Senator or Congressman could easily identify the British

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Ambassador. The British Government extended his tour of duty well beyond the normal period, and when he returned to England he gratefully accepted the peerage he had earlier turned down.

WHEN BRYCE had made his first trip to America, in 1870, he was following a well-travelled path for British visitors—New York, Boston, Chicago. He met E. L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation*, and Charles Eliot, the 35-year old President of Harvard, and attended the New York State Democratic Convention presided over by William Marcy Tweed, then at the zenith of his political power. Bryce kept a detailed diary of his journey, and wrote lengthy letters to his family describing the places he had visited, the people he met, and his initial impressions of life in America. He gathered material everywhere he went, and later declared that five-sixths of *The American Commonwealth* was the result of conversations on steamboats and trains, in hotel lobbies, and at political conventions.

By the time of his second trip, in 1881, he had been appointed Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford and was a recently elected Member of Parliament—new honours which broadened his range of friends and acquaintances in the United States. On his return to England after this second trip, he wrote to an American friend:

> "I have formed the hope of writing a little book (this between ourselves for I know what you make in America of Englishmen's books about you) to try to give my countrymen some juster views than they have about the United States . . . ."

A third trip followed two years later and, as on his previous visit, Bryce spent most of it touring the Western states and territories. It was after this journey that he began to write; four years later, in 1888, the first edition of *The American Commonwealth* appeared.

> "When I first visited America eighteen years ago [Bryce wrote in the preface], I brought home a swarm of generalizations. Half of them were thrown overboard after a second visit. Of the half that remained, some were dropped into the Atlantic . . . after a third visit; and although the two later journeys gave birth to some new views, these views are fewer and more discreetly cautious than their departed sisters of 1870."

The book received favourable reviews in almost every important journal on both sides of the Atlantic, and was immediately hailed as a major work of scholarship. Woodrow Wilson, then a Professor at Wesleyan College, reviewed it for the *Political Science Quarterly*: "This is a great work, worthy of the heartiest praise."

In the three subsequent editions, each a thorough revision of the previous one, new chapters were added, others abridged, and the statistics were updated. For more than a generation *The American Commonwealth* remained the most thorough study of American institutions, manners, and traits ever attempted by a British writer. Others—including H. G. Wells—tried to tackle the same subject, but no one came close to matching Bryce's detailed knowledge and precise balance of criticism and praise. Allan Nevins, arguably America's greatest 20th-century historian, has said that Bryce was the first to offer a thorough diagnosis and prognosis of America's shortcomings, and had "enabled us to see ourselves as we had never done before". Alexis de Tocqueville and Bryce stand out among all foreign writers on the United States, but "Bryce both corrects and amplifies Tocqueville".

From the beginning, Bryce was measured against Tocqueville although the two works differed sharply in purpose and content. "The book which it might seem natural for me to take as a model", Bryce wrote in his introduction to the first edition of *The American Commonwealth*, "is the *Democracy in America*. But I have conceived the subject upon quite other lines." Where Tocqueville had set forth an analysis of democratic theory, weighing the costs and benefits of liberty and equality, with lessons from the American experience, Bryce's object was "to paint the institutions and people of America as they are".

The differences between the books are reflected in the differences between the men and the times in which they wrote. Tocqueville's book had appeared in 1832, when the author, a minor government official, was 27 years old. When *The American Commonwealth* came off the press 56 years later, Bryce, aged 50, was an internationally known scholar and a rising star in the Liberal Party, with nearly a decade of Parliamentary experience behind him. In 1832, the United States had a population of 15 million people, almost all of them settled east of the Mississippi. By 1888, there were more than 60 million Americans, and San Francisco and Seattle were flourishing communities.

Bryce may not have used Tocqueville's book as a model but neither did he totally ignore it. There are several references to his predecessor sprinkled throughout *The American Commonwealth*, and in almost all of them Bryce differs from the points of view expressed in *Democracy in America*. For example, where Tocqueville had stressed the threat of the majority riding roughshod over the minority as the central fault of democratic government, Bryce saw no evidence of this danger. At another point, Bryce, with a civil nod in Tocqueville's direction, warned about the danger of exaggerating the influence of forms of government on culture and the popular arts. "I doubt if there be any solid ground for expecting monotony or vulgarity under one form of government more than another", he declared. To be sure, American democracy had produced no new Periclean age but nor had it "led a wretched people into a barren plain of featureless mediocrity".

BRYCE'S OBVIOUS AFFECTION for the United States imbues all his writing, without brimming over into uncritical sentimentality. Before leaving New York to return to England at the end of his first visit, he wrote to his family in Scotland:

"Were it not for all of you . . . I really think I would

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> emigrate hither; there is a sort of freedom and spirit about the place which one doesn't get in England."

A meticulous analysis of that freedom and spirit subsequently appeared in several chapters of *The American Commonwealth*. America, said Bryce, was a land of hope which must be seen to be understood. The energy, ambition and optimism of the people could only be understood by moving among them.

Bryce knew from personal observation the squalid working and living conditions which most English workers then endured, and was heartened by the general air of prosperity he encountered in America. "It is impossible not to feel warm, cheered, invigorated by the sense of such material well being", he wrote. "I doubt if any European can realize till he has been in America how much a difference it makes . . . to feel all round him so many of the external conditions of happiness." Only in the larger American cities could one see signs of poverty, where recent immigrants "with the shiftlessness of Europe still clinging to them", were huddled together in squalor.

Bryce's affection for the United States was far from being indiscriminate, but even his sharpest strictures lacked the rancour and meanness of spirit to be found in English visitors such as Sir Lepel Griffin. After a distinguished career as a senior civil servant in India, Sir Lepel had visited the United States at about the same time as Bryce, and saw it as "the country of disillusion and disappointment". Nothing in American politics, art, literature, or culture attracted his slightest admiration. "With some experience of every civilized country", Sir Lepel summed up, "I can think of no other country, except Russia, in which I would not prefer to reside, none in which life would be more sordid, mean and unlovely."

Bryce's own response to America sprang partly from the fact that he regarded Americans (except for Negroes and recent immigrants) as transplanted Englishmen—different from the English, to be sure, but not "foreign" in the sense that Germans or French were. The people who settled the colonies, fought the Revolution, and drew up the Constitution were following in the footsteps of those who wrote the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights. Americans succeeded as well as they did because they were "the choicest children of England".

Tom Paine might not have agreed with this assessment. Americans, he said in 1776, were a mixture of many European peoples, a nation of immigrants: "Europe, not England, is the parent country of America."

According to Bryce, it was only after the Revolution that Americans had begun to think of themselves as a new people, "forgetting in the pride of their new nationalism that both their character and their institutions were English in origin". To emphasise the point, he even denied that there was a unique body of writing that might be regarded as American literature. America called herself a new country and might in time develop a new literature, but there was no evidence of that as yet.

Could books written in the United States, he asked, be considered American literature in the same sense in which books written in France and Germany belonged to the literatures of those countries? Obviously not. "For purposes of thought and art, the United States is part of England and England is a part of America." The writings of David Hume, Adam Smith, and Sir Walter Scott, he argued, were considered part of English literature, yet were not more different from their English contemporaries of 75 or 100 years before than current American writers from *their* English contemporaries: "Fenimore Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow and those on whom their mantle has fallen, belong to England as well as to America."

THE LITERATURE OF the American people might not diverge from that of the English, but their politics and government certainly did; and Bryce devoted nearly two-thirds of *The American Commonwealth* to describing the differences. He viewed the two major political parties as "the great moving forces" even though, unlike the Liberals and the Tories in England, no significant doctrinal issues separated them. The differences which once distinguished political parties in the United States had all but vanished, stripped away by the progress of events:

> "American parties exist because they have existed. The mill has been constructed and its machinery goes on turning even when there is no grist to grind."

Nor was Bryce impressed by the method whereby Americans chose their chief executive. The presidential system, he said, was "not one of the conspicuous successes of the American Constitution". He devoted an entire chapter to explaining to his British readers the mechanics of the nominating convention, but was at a loss for words when he had to describe a presidential campaign. The hoop-la and bizarre scenes of that quadrennial affair had no parallel in British experience. During one campaign, he had watched a throng of New York lawyers marching up Broadway in support of a presidential candidate. To Bryce—a barrister himself—this extraordinary behaviour almost defied belief. "Imagine", he wrote incredulously, "eight hundred English barristers turning out from the Temple and Lincoln's Inn to walk in slow procession from London Bridge to South Kensington shouting themselves hoarse for Gladstone or Disraeli . . . ."

In the two decades just prior to the publication of *The American Commonwealth*, the United States had endured a string of eminently forgettable Presidents, including Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur. Why was it, Europeans frequently asked—and still do—that great men are not chosen as President?

Most first-rate men in the United States, Bryce replied, were involved in developing the resources of the country—building railroads, mining coal, manufacturing steel, or growing wheat—and were not attracted to the political scene. Others were deterred by the prying and probing which is inherent in democratic politics:

> "Fiercer than the light which beats upon a throne is the light which beats upon a presidential candidate searching out all the recesses of his past life."

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Though the Presidency might be the highest political office in the land, Bryce informed his readers, it offered no challenge and made no demands. "A president need not be a man of brilliant intellect", he wrote:

> "His main duties are to be prompt and firm in securing the due execution of the laws and maintaining the public peace. Four-fifths of his work is the same as that which devolves on the chairman of a commercial company or the manager of a railway."

Most of the men who had filled the office in the last 60 years, Bryce observed, had seldom been above average in character or intellect, yet Americans seemed undisturbed by this. "The ordinary American voter", he explained, "is not put off by mediocre candidates since he has a lower estimate of the qualities needed for public office than do most Europeans." Moreover, unlike a Prime Minister in England, a President received little in the way of deference or social distinction. "He has no military guard, no chamberlains or grooms-in-waiting. He is surrounded by no such pomp and enforces no such etiquette as that which belongs to the governors of second class English colonies."

THE BIGGEST DRAWBACK to being President of the United States was unquestionably, according to Bryce, the need to live in Washington. This was not his favourite American city, and it failed miserably, in his judgment, when compared to London, Paris, Vienna, Rome, or even Berlin: "The United States is the only great country in the world which has no capital." The capital of a country, he added, should be not only the seat of political government but also a reservoir of financial resources, the favoured residence of the great and powerful, a place where the most widely read newspapers and journals were published, and a centre that attracted men of literary and scientific ability. This was definitely not Washington in the 1880s, then in great measure a city of unpaved streets, fifth-rate hotels, and miasmal swamplands.

The city's fashionable society lived in Georgetown and maintained a studied indifference to politics and politicians. Its political society, on the other hand, was so largely composed of office-holders and office-seekers "as to produce an atmosphere dangerous to those statesmen who breathe it too long without interruption".

Talk about American foreign policy was seldom heard in Washington, and the subject rarely affected internal political debate. Even leading statesmen were unfamiliar with recent changes in European diplomacy. There was no class, Bryce lamented, which felt itself called upon to be concerned with foreign affairs, and the people were profoundly convinced that all such matters belonged to the bad Old World. "The only principle to which the people have learnt to cling in foreign policy", he remarked, "is that the less they have of it the better." Nevertheless, Bryce predicted that the era of American expansion was not over. "All experience points to the detachment of province after province from Mexico and its absorption into the American Union." There were many Americans in the South-western states who looked upon the absorption of Mexico as "Manifest Destiny" and were willing to give destiny a hand.

Unlike the central governments in European countries, the Federal government in the United States was a remote and distant authority in the lives of most Americans:

> "The American may through a long life never be reminded of the Federal government, except when he votes at presidential and congressional elections, lodges a complaint against the post office or opens his trunks for a customs house officer on a pier in New York when he returns from a tour of Europe."

Anyone who wanted to understand the United States, Bryce advised, should turn his attention from the Federal Constitution to a study of State governments. He then proceeded to offer an exhaustive description of state constitutions, state legislatures, state finance, and the workings of state bureaucracies. No writer before him, foreign or American, had examined that machinery in such thorough detail.

TODAY'S STANDARD TEXTBOOKS in American history, such as Samuel Eliot Morison's *The Growth of the American Republic*, usually ignore Bryce—or, if they mention him, merely quote his statement: "The government of the cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States." By itself, however, this hardly represents Bryce's views on municipal government.

Election bribery, ballot-box stuffing, multiple voting, and other corrupt practices still afflicted city government in the 1880s, despite the lessons offered by the Tweed Ring in New York City more than a decade earlier. Admittedly fraud existed, said Bryce, but it was nowhere near so prevalent a problem as it had been:

> "No one who studies the municipal history of the last decades will doubt that things are better than they were twenty-five years ago. The newer forms of government are an improvement upon the older. Rogues are less audacious. Good citizens are more active. Party spirit is still permitted to dominate and pervert municipal politics, yet the mischief it does is more clearly discerned and the number of those who resist it increases daily."

Bryce ridiculed the cant and hypocrisy of foreigners who perceived America only as a hopelessly corrupt society. These visitors from abroad, he noted, were mostly wealthy and reactionary and would seize any opportunity to disparage popular government. Municipal corruption in the United States was no greater than it had been in England until a short while before: "Englishmen, in particular", he reminded his fellow countrymen, "have a useful knack of forgetting their own shortcomings when contemplating the United States."

City government begins to go bad, Bryce decided, when a population exceeds 100,000 and includes a large proportion of recent immigrants. The tens of thousands of Russians, Poles, Italians and Greeks then arriving each year would immediately be enrolled in a political party by ward politicians, and herded to a voting booth on election day. These

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ward politicians, whom Bryce described as "usually vulgar, sometimes brutal and more rarely criminal", were to be found mainly in the larger cities, but, he added, were far from being typical American politicians.

> "The commonest mistake of Europeans who talk about America is to assume that the political vices of New York are found everywhere. The next most common is to suppose they are found nowhere else."

Municipal corruption was a complex canvas, Bryce implied. Ward politicians and illiterate immigrants were only part of the picture. There was also too much government (Federal, state, and local), too many elections, and too many elective offices. The ordinary citizen had neither the time nor the energy to monitor them all, and finally it was easier to tolerate corrupt government than to sacrifice his business in an effort to set things straight.

However bad the current conditions in the larger cities, Bryce was grandly optimistic about the future. There existed in the United States "a reserve of force and patriotism more than sufficient to sweep away all the evils which are now tolerated and to make the politics of the country worthy of its material grandeur and of the private virtues of its inhabitants".

THE FIRST EDITION OF *The American Commonwealth* had appeared a few years before the "Second Wave" of immigration—mainly from southern and eastern Europe—was about to crest. By 1890, 9 million foreign-born people, out of a total population of 60 million, were living in the United States—more than half of them in cities with a population of 100,000 or more. In that same year, 80% of those living in New York were either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born parents.

Until only a few years before, there had been unquestioning confidence in the assimilative powers of American society, but doubts were beginning to emerge and the movement to restrict immigration was attracting public support. Bryce was supremely confident that, whatever the diversity of characteristics the newly arrived immigrants might bring with them, the assimilative forces would prevail. "What strikes the traveller", he observed, "is the amazing solvent power which American institutions, habits and ideas exercise upon newcomers of all races. The intellectual and moral atmosphere into which the settlers from Europe come has more power to assimilate them than their race qualities have power to change it." Schools, newspapers, the workplace, and "the all-pervading force of opinion", he predicted, were among the forces that would eventually work their way to produce a uniform and harmonious society.

Bryce, although deploring the immediate consequences of unrestricted immigration, particularly on public life in the larger cities, recognised that these cities had never been unqualified paradises:

> "There is a disposition in the United States to use the immigrants, and especially the Irish, much as the cat is used in the kitchen to account for broken plates and food which disappears. The cities have no doubt suffered from the immigrant vote. But New York was not an Eden before the Irish came and would not become an Eden were they all to move to San Francisco."

Bryce never advocated immigration bars, nor did he abandon his faith in the "melting-pot" theory, despite abundant evidence of its failure. In 1921, a year before he died, he was telling an audience in London: "There has never been anywhere an environment of more persuasive and compulsive power than that into which the immigrant is plunged when he lands in America. He seems to melt in it as a lump of sugar melts in a cup of tea."

CONFIDENT ABOUT the future of the immigrant, Bryce was extremely uncertain about prospects for the Negro. By 1888, there were approximately seven million Negroes in the United States, almost all living in the former Confederate states. Bryce toured this area several times, depicted its economic conditions, and graphically portrayed the techniques used by whites to disenfranchise the Negro.

The line of separation between the whites and the blacks, Bryce said, was more sharply drawn than it was before the Civil War. It had been a crime to bring blacks by force from Africa, and a major blunder to impose political power upon them when 95% were unfit by training or experience to handle it. This blunder, according to Bryce, had greatly exacerbated ill feelings between the races in the decades since the Civil War.

The race problem, he found, was not much discussed. It had absorbed the nation's attention for more than 70 years, and the nation was weary of the subject. "There is a disposition", he observed, "to leave the southern states alone to deal with the difficulties which the presence of a large Negro population creates." But the racial problem, he soon recognised, was not exclusively a Southern problem. Wherever one went in the United States, one was aware of tension and ill-feeling between the races:

> "Except on the Pacific coast, a Negro never sits down to dinner with a white man; you never encounter him at a private party. He is not received in a hotel of the better sort. He is not shaved in a place frequented by white men. He worships in a church of his own. No native white woman would dream of receiving his addresses. Nor does it make any difference that he is three parts or seven parts white, if the stain of colour can still be discerned. Kindly condescension is the best he can look for. Social equality is utterly out of his reach."

Bryce described relations between whites and blacks—particularly at election time—as "a capital question in national as well as State politics". He saw no easy answers, no quick solutions. "The Southern states will long retain the imprint of slavery", he predicted, "not merely in the presence of a host of Negroes but in the degradation of the poor white population." He examined the solutions that were being put forward, including the transport of Negroes to Africa, and found them impractical and unworkable. For many years to come, he forecast, the Negro would continue to do

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America's hard work, but gradually the ablest members of the race would move up to the higher walks of life.

Bryce certainly did not consider beneficial change in racial relations to be the likely result of legislative action at the national level, for he did not exactly admire what he saw of the United States Congress. "It does not impress the nation", he wrote, "by either its intellectual power or its moral dignity"; and he again noted, by way of explanation, that other careers in America, such as law, education, finance or commerce, offered an ambitious young man a better prospect than did politics for enjoyment and distinction.

In contrast to England, where the property-owning classes sensed a threat from below and thus had a strong motive for keeping their hands on the levers of power, there was in America, Bryce said, a pervasive sense of economic security, and the rich and well-off were content to let others do the active work of politics. Unfortunately, he continued, Americans underrated the difficulties of government and overrated the capacities of men of common sense. "The people are good", he concluded, "but not good enough to be able to dispense with efficient service by capable representatives and wise guidance by enlightened leaders. They are neither well served nor well led."

THERE WERE GREATER PROSPECTS for change, he thought, in the burgeoning colleges and universities that he visited, although of the 400 institutions of higher learning in the United States, only eight or nine were "true universities", on a par with Cambridge and Oxford.

As an academician, Bryce liked to visit universities on his travels around America, rarely missing any chance to visit a campus, meet the professors, and talk to the students. On one of his tours he conducted a seminar at Johns Hopkins; Woodrow Wilson, a student there, described him as a "captivating" teacher.

Bryce's close friendships with Charles Eliot (President of Harvard), Daniel Gilman (President of Johns Hopkins), Andrew White (President of Cornell), and others, opened doors to many of the smaller universities and colleges, offering insights not available to other visitors. Unlike universities in England, he said, the "true universities" in America were not primarily places for spending three or four pleasant years and only incidentally places of instruction:

> "Nothing more strikes a stranger who visits American universities than the ardour with which the younger generation has thrown itself into study. There is more zeal and heartiness, more freshness of mind, more love of learning, more willingness to forgo the chances of fame and wealth for the sake of adding to the stock of human knowledge, than is to be found today in Oxford or Cambridge."

He visited the women's colleges of Wellesley and Vassar, comparing them favourably with Girton and Newnham—to whose graduates the University of Cambridge did not yet grant university degrees. In fact, women in or out of universities were better off in America than in Europe, he reported, and there was a greater ease and freedom in their relationships with men. "A European cannot spend an evening in an American drawing room", he remarked, "without perceiving that the attitude of men to women is not that with which he is familiar at home."

It was easier for American women to have a professional career or to find a job in schools, offices or factories, but this greater freedom, he implied, might come with a hidden (though hardly expensive) price-tag. "In omnibuses and horse cars, it was formerly the custom for a gentleman to rise and offer his seat to a lady if there were not vacant places. This is now less universally done. In New York and Boston, I have seen the men keep their seats when ladies entered."

DESPITE HIS sympathetic understanding of American institutions, Bryce carefully avoided indiscriminate praise, balancing approval with a sensitive assessment of shortcomings. Towards the end of his book, he set out what he considered the major American failings. In a chapter entitled "True Faults of American Democracy", he described the defects in government: the baneful influence of great wealth, the prominence of inferior men, and the want of dignity in the conduct of public affairs, among others. In the chapter called "Uniformity of American Life" he listed America's aesthetic faults.

Matthew Arnold had recently noted a want of the interesting and the beautiful in American life. "If we in England", wrote Arnold in 1888, "were without the cathedrals, parish churches and castles . . . but had only the towns and buildings which our middle class had created, we should be living with much the same absence of beauty." Bryce tended to agree. There was too much uniformity, physical and cultural, compared to Europe. American cities, for example, apart from Boston, New York and New Orleans, had a depressing sameness about them. Most cities in America differed from each other in only one way: ". . . some of them are built more with brick than with wood and others more with wood than brick." Life in Europe, he continued, was not more easy or more pleasant than life in the United States, but it did offer a greater variety, "a richness blended of many elements".

Bryce may have been ready to emigrate to the United States after his first visit in 1870, but that desire was not evident by the time his book appeared.

BRYCE WAS NO FUTUROLOGIST, and *The American Commonwealth* offered few predictions about what was likely to happen in the 36 states which in those days comprised the Union; his book is mainly one of description and analysis. Nevertheless, he did from time to time project contemporary trends and present informed guesses about what was to follow. For example, in 1888 Bryce had ruefully concluded that centuries might pass before Negroes and Whites learned to treat each other in a civilised manner. Most Americans are still learning how to do that.

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If Bryce could have read Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944) he would have found much with which he was already familiar, and in all probability he would have agreed with the sombre conclusions of the 1968 Kerner Commission report on civil disorders. He would be pleased to learn that today more than 7,000 Afro-Americans hold elected public office in the US—but would undoubtedly inquire why this increased political power had not produced corresponding economic and social gains.

When Bryce first stepped ashore in America in 1870, the Anglo-Saxon majority was very much the dominant ethnic group, although they never viewed themselves as such, and Anglo-Saxon racialism was still a budding theory. In 1911, it received official sanction in the Dillingham Commission report, and was embedded in American law with passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which remained on the books until its racial quotas were removed by the Hart-Celler Act of 1965.

Bryce was no racialist. He could never have told an American audience, as his friend and Oxford colleague Edward Freeman did, that ". . . the best remedy for whatever is amiss in America would be if every Irishman should kill a Negro and then be hanged for it". But he certainly viewed the recently arrived immigrants as a "problem", although he never questioned the assimilative powers of American institutions and remained a firm believer in the melting-pot theory. By assimilation he meant, though he never defined it, conformity with Anglo-American customs, habits and values. In the last decade of the 19th century, Anglo-Americans were the final arbiters of what it meant to be an American, and they held that position until the decline of the WASP in the 1970s.

BRYCE WOULD HAVE been surprised to learn from reading Daniel Moynihan's and Nathan Glazer's *Beyond the Melting-Pot* of 1963 that "the melting-pot never happened", and to watch the theory of assimilation being carried away by the removal-men of history. Today that theory has returned, revived and refurbished; immigration and its consequences are once again issues of intense debate.

Bryce would feel very much at home in contemporary America, with its familiar sounds of nativism, while his criticisms of presidential nominating conventions, the baneful influence of wealth in politics, and the prominence of inferior men in public life have become the stuff of tomorrow's newspaper editorial.

In 1888, Bryce said that the US Congress "does not impress the nation by either its intellectual power or its moral dignity". Who would quibble with that today? And what of his observation that "a president need not be a man of brilliant intellect"? Have recent years not been sufficient proof?

Contemporary readers of *The American Commonwealth* will occasionally come upon a passage that almost defies belief. Was the authority of the Federal government in everyday life ever as remote as Bryce described it? In our days, when Federal income tax, the Federal Drug Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Federal Reserve System are the common coin of daily conversation, this seems unlikely. And did foreign policy play such a small a role in public debate as Bryce contends? Was there really a time when you could read an entire daily newspaper without turning to an atlas of the world?

Yet if Bryce were now to revise his book, the chapter on "The Uniformity of American Life" would require only slight change. A mere paragraph or two on the homogenising effect of television, and the difficulty of telling one airport terminal from another, would bring it up to date.

On the other hand, Bryce would have to throw away almost everything he said about higher education. No single aspect of American life has changed as much in the last 100 years. Those eight or nine "true universities" now number more than 200 (out of over 2,000 colleges and universities), and many of the state educational systems—such as that in California, with ten campuses and a full-time enrolment of nearly 500,000 students—were either nascent or still unborn in Bryce's time.

"For purposes of thought and art, the United States is part of England and England is part of America"? Rupert Murdoch might readily agree with Bryce, but the Ditchley House crowd would have to dine and drink for a long time on that proposition before reaching a conclusion.

Finally, if Bryce were alive today, would he join Britain's "brain drain" to the United States? Probably not; and for the very same reasons he gave over 100 years ago. But you can be sure he would have a Concorde "Frequent Flyer" award tucked away in his passport wallet.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Wales

By David Rees

THE LESSONS OF the Welsh past are never more elusive than at the time of parliamentary by-elections in the Principality. During the Pontypridd by-election in February, it was almost obligatory for media correspondents to invoke the sweeping Scottish Nationalist Party victory at Govan in 1988. Expectations of a large *Plaid Cymru* (Welsh Nationalist Party) vote seemed to equate, implicitly if not explicitly, the manifestations of nationalism in Scotland and Wales.

In the event, *Plaid Cymru* did very well at Pontypridd, polling just over 25%. This was probably a protest vote, however, for in recent British general elections their vote throughout the whole of Wales has averaged a mere 7-8%. In 1983 and 1987, for example, Labour polled 37% (45%) of the Welsh vote, the Conservatives 31% (29.5%), and the *Plaid* 7.8% (7.3%). By the time of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election in early May (which turned out to be a triumph for Labour), the *Plaid Cymru* vote was a mere 3.5%. But if Welsh Nationalists are to equal the recent electoral impact of the Scottish Nationalist Party, it is essential for them to replace or mortally threaten Labour in a number of key South Wales industrial constituencies. And of this contingency there is no sign at all. Labour since 1979 has indeed lost its dominance, its old certainty, in Wales, but it is the Conservatives who have threatened its position as the leading political party.

Nor is there any sense of a distant constitutional crisis over the Union that some commentators assure us exists in Scotland. Of course the opposition parties in Wales are all now pledged to some form of Welsh Assembly. Yet there seems to be no great popular enthusiasm for devolution, and a referendum could quite conceivably result in a repeat of the Welsh rejection of the Labour Government's proposals of March 1979, when the vote ran 4-1 against. True, the vote in favour of acceptance might be rather larger today, but that would not affect the general principle of lukewarm Welsh enthusiasm for devolved government.

Why is there no direct comparison between Wales and Scotland on the issue of devolution? Some of the answers lie in well-established administrative differences. Scotland was given its own Secretary of State (a Cabinet-level appointment) about a century ago, while the office of Secretary of State for Wales dates back only to 1964 (a creation of Harold Wilson's first Administration, when the veteran Labour politician James Griffiths was appointed). The Welsh Office in Cardiff has accumulated a number of important functions from Whitehall, but the devolved administration in St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, is significantly stronger.

There is, too, a more vigorous sense of professional life in Scotland, where they have their own quite separate legal and educational systems, and it is possible to live one's life without too much reference to England or English ways. This is certainly not the case in Wales. And then there is the geographical factor: Edinburgh is 400 miles from London, while Cardiff is only 150 miles from the British capital. In short, for a number of social, political, and geographical reasons—some of them stemming back a very long time—Wales has become much more closely integrated into the British social and administrative system.

A more immediate reason for the difference between the two countries in the context of Westminster politics is the current collapse of the Conservative (and Unionist) vote in Scotland. Ups-and-downs in the Conservative vote in Wales may be seen in the general election figures, but it is certainly a lot healthier than Conservative Central Office could ever have hoped for a generation ago. Indeed, Welsh Conservatives seem just as integrated into the general community as the traditional Labour supporters; they are not a caste apart (as many commentators describe the Scottish Tories).

But overt political differences between the two countries are only part of the story. The Welsh language and the Welsh cultural heritage point towards a tenacious national identity which over the centuries has survived many vicissitudes—and this quite independently of institutions on the Scottish pattern. Such national differences are not always apparent; they must be discovered by the sympathetic newcomer. The older factors of nationality are of course interwoven with the modern political scene, but it sometimes seems that in Wales these ancestral themes have a life of their own, quite divorced from the calculations of politicians in Westminster.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INTEGRATION probably began in 1485, with the advent of the first (part-Welsh) Tudor monarch. Legislative union followed in 1536, but this did not bring total fusion between the two countries; some judicial and administrative differences remained for several centuries. Whatever the criticisms of 20th-century Welsh nationalists, their forebears of the 16th and 17th centuries believed that Welsh national pride and national interests alike were on the whole assuaged by the Tudors and even by their Stuart successors—and a discernible respect for the Tudors remains a constant thread in much of Welsh historical writing. But the Union of England and Wales took place so long ago that most people in Wales take it for granted. What are some of the more recent historical and cultural factors that keep Wales anchored to that Union?

By the 18th century, the Welsh squires whose ancestors

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had rallied to the Tudors and then governed Wales on the local level as if by some prescriptive right, had become English in their speech and cultural attitudes. Then a new patriotism was born which emphasised the history, the literature, and the language of Wales. At first this movement was propagated by the genteel Romantics, dedicated antiquarians and others who founded the *Cymmrodorion* patriotic society in London, and by the poets and literary folk who originated the *eisteddfod* movement—competitive meetings of poets, both on the local and on the national level. The *eisteddfod* movement was further inspired by "Iolo Morgannwg"—William Edwards (d. 1826)—a cultural impresario of genius; he invented the neo-Druidical *Gorsedd* of bards, which was then married to the national *eisteddfod*. Yet political separatism (as opposed to cultural nationalism) was no part of this romantic literary movement, which extended into the 19th century.

FAR MORE IMPORTANT, however, in the making of modern Wales were the twin forces of industrialism and Nonconformity, which came to dominate Welsh life in the later 19th century. These strands intertwined to produce a Liberal political ascendancy which was to last until the 1920s, when the Labour Party became the dominant force. In this process of ballot-box social revolution, the Wales of the squires who had ruled the land since Tudor times was swept away so completely that hundreds of fine country houses were destroyed or left to rot.[1] (There is no Yeatsian concern with "the big house" in modern Welsh or Anglo-Welsh writing.) The gentry as a political factor was thus destroyed, clearing the way for a cultural as well as a political dominance by the Left that lasted, by and large, for many decades.

It seemed uncertain at one time whether it was nationalism or radicalism that would dominate the Liberal Party in Wales, and for a few years in the 1890s it appeared that Welsh Liberalism might become a Home Rule movement. Classical European nationalism was one potent influence, with its exemplary heroes: Garibaldi in Italy and Kossuth in Hungary. The example of the United States formed yet another strand, while nearer home, across the Irish Sea, the growth of Parnellism in the Irish Home Rule Party seemed a model which might easily be emulated by the Welsh Members of Parliament at Westminster. For in Wales too, there was a "land problem", combined with the growing tension which surrounded the Established Church of England in a country ever more radically Nonconformist.

Initially, however, the growth of Nonconformism, which transformed the Welsh social scene from within, was not primarily concerned with national feeling: saving souls and eradicating the sin and superstition of the past was task enough for that uncompromising religious movement. With its spread, in the closing decades of the 19th century, came the intensive industrial development in south-east Wales which tied the country ever closer to the British economy; from all over Britain there was large-scale immigration into the industrial valleys.

The growing sense of nationality was further nurtured by an indigenous revival of interest in Welsh history and litature—a broadly-based development affecting all parts of the population. Historians of the period have noted the significance of the appointment of John Rhys as Professor of Celtic in Oxford University in 1877. He published in that year *Lectures in Celtic Philology*—the first attempt in the modern period at a scholarly analysis of the Welsh language by a Welshman. Rhys soon became the centre for a group of talented students whose influence spread throughout the Welsh literary scene. Elected Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, in 1895, and knighted in 1907, he remained an influential scholar as his interests developed into archaeology, folk-literature, and mythology. Other important developments in this period were the creation of a National University, a National Library, and a National Museum.

AS A RESULT OF these and other influences, in the early 1890s it began to seem as if the 30 or more Welsh Liberal Members of Parliament might develop into a well-organised group analogous to the Irish Home Rulers. Moreover, outside Parliament there flourished in Wales *Undeb Cymru Fydd*—literally "The League of Wales To Be", but more colloquially "Young Wales". *Cymru Fydd* was not merely a Home Rule organisation; it also stressed social and cultural objectives, and these were subscribed to by many who did not specifically support self-government for Wales. Yet Wales was not Ireland, and in retrospect the decline of *Cymru Fydd* by 1900 seems inevitable.

In the first place, *Cymru Fydd* never produced a strong leader, and Welsh radicals gradually came to recognise that by breaking with the Liberal Party they would lose any effective influence at Westminster. Of the two influential Welsh Liberal MPs who originally supported *Cymru Fydd*'s objectives, Tom Ellis became a government whip at Westminster, while Lloyd George engaged in internecine rivalries within the movement.

Then there were the irreconcilable differences between rural north and west Wales and the industrial south—divisions which reflected the rival claims of radicalism and nationalism, and which remain an enduring rift on the Welsh political scene. The showdown came between *Cymru Fydd* and the South Wales Liberal Federation at what the historian of modern Wales, Kenneth O. Morgan, calls "the notorious conference" held at Newport on 16 January 1896, when Lloyd George was rebuffed by Alderman Robert Bird of Cardiff. The cosmopolitan populations of the great towns of south Wales would never submit to Welsh domination, Bird declared. "Amid uproar, Lloyd George was howled down, and the prospect of national unity vanished."[2] The breakup of *Cymru Fydd* was decisive.

Resemblances between the Welsh and Irish Home Rule

[1] See Thomas Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (second edition, 1989).

[2] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (1970 edition), p. 163.

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movements were only superficial. The Welsh objective was recognition as a fully equal part of the British system; Ireland's aim was severance—complete exclusion from Britain. The underlying aspirations of one country culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Anglo-Irish Treaty over five years later. The aspirations of the other resulted in successive generations of Welsh Liberal and Labour politicians working, not without success, within the Westminster system. As a result, nationalism in Wales continues to be cast in a cultural rather than an overtly political form.

At the heart of this cultural nationalism and its many manifestations in today's Wales, lies the Welsh language, *yr hen iath*, for its fading lies at the heart of much Welsh nationalist protest. Even in the early 20th century the Welsh language had continued to thrive; it remained the day-to-day tongue—the language of the hearth—in significant parts of industrial south Wales as well as in the rural areas. In addition, a number of excellent Welsh-language writers and scholars established a modern literary tradition: these men included John Morris-Jones, Sir Thomas Parry-Williams, T. Gwynn Jones, Robert Williams Parry, and W. J. Gruffydd—who edited the magazine *Llenor (The Writer)* for many years from 1922. A major English-language historian of this generation was Sir John Lloyd, whose *History of Wales* to 1282 remains the standard work.

But following World War II, as daily use of the Welsh language began to decrease, came the beginnings of a cultural crisis in the face of the 20th-century modernisation process. One of the significant indicators of the decline of the Welsh language was the decline of the Nonconformist chapels, long the focus of social life, in an increasingly secular and more socially mobile society. Between the two World Wars there had been considerable emigration from Wales to England, and while most of this population movement took place from industrial south Wales to the English south-east and the Midlands, the Welsh rural areas—traditional stronghold of the language—were also affected.

For a full generation after the 1920s, however, the language crisis took second place in public attention to the economic and social problems which Wales shared with the rest of the United Kingdom—the Great Depression, World War II, and then the period of post-War recovery. The Welsh Nationalist Party, later to be known as *Plaid Cymru*, had been founded in 1925 with a programme of Dominion status for Wales, under the Crown. Between the Wars, and for some time after 1945, the *Plaid* languished although its popular post-War President, Gwynfor Evans, gave the Party a completely modern image. But, despite many years of dedicated campaigning, *Plaid Cymru* has never been able to develop a mass base in industrial south Wales. (Most, but not all, of the Welsh-speakers live in west and north Wales, in the counties of Gwynedd and Dyfed.) The division between radicalism and nationalism remains.

After 1945, the underlying language crisis accelerated as further rural depopulation combined with intensive growth in mass communications—press, radio, and especially television. Further immigration into Wales from the rest of the United Kingdom probably played its part. While in 1911 about 43% of the population spoke Welsh, the figure recorded in the 1981 census had declined to about 19%.

In Scotland and Ireland the sense of nationality is established quite independently of any linguistic base, but indigenous Welsh institutions historically are not very strong. The country's centrifugal tendencies separate north from south, and there is the sheer physical proximity to the great English population centres. Could the essence of Welsh nationality continue to exist if the language went into irreversible decline? Might this mean the end of one of the oldest literary traditions in Europe—and with it the end of the Welsh identity?

A NEW AWARENESS of the importance of the Welsh language and a number of positive steps being taken by the Government and by voluntary organisations to halt the language decline probably stems from a remarkable BBC radio address by Saunders Lewis in 1962. Poet, dramatist, literary historian and critic, Saunders Lewis (1983-1985) is probably the most important—and controversial—figure in Welsh literature in recent times.

His 1962 address was given in Welsh, with the title *"Tynged yr Iath"* ("The Fate of the Language"). In it, Lewis stated his belief that, given current trends, the Welsh language would be extinct by the beginning of the 21st century. He therefore proposed a programme of virtual civil disobedience with the objective of ensuring that all administration for national and local government functions should be conducted in Welsh. That language, he said, had never been given its proper political importance—and the Welsh themselves were to blame for this. What was needed to reverse the trend was both will-power and "revolutionary methods". Saving the language was a far more important objective than self-government.

Implicit in Lewis's approach was the belief that *Plaid Cymru* had concentrated too heavily on the electoral battle, and was too preoccupied with the economic reasons for self-government. It is clear also that he saw as the chief threat to the Welsh language not a political phenomenon but rather the whole process of modernisation as it was applied in an almost impersonal way.

The effect of this address partly reflected Saunders Lewis's remarkable personal involvement in Welsh affairs. The son of a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist minister in Liverpool, he had served during World War I as an officer in the British Army, and then graduated from Liverpool University. Wales soon became his preoccupation and he was one of the founders of the Welsh Nationalist Party in 1925, becoming its President the following year. A Francophile, strongly influenced by the works of Charles Maurras and the ideas of *Action Française*, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1932.

Appointed to a lectureship in the University College of Swansea in the 1920s, he lost his post in 1937 as a result of involvement in an arson attack on the building materials for an RAF airfield in the secluded Lleyn peninsula of north Wales. He was jailed for nine months, resigned the Presidency of *Plaid Cymru*, and thereafter concentrated on a

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prolific literary career, although during 1942-43 he fought a Parliamentary by-election in the University of Wales on the platform of a negotiated peace. This attitude, however, did not stem from a pacifist approach but rather from Lewis's belief that the War was a conflict in which Wales should remain neutral. (He was always strongly opposed to both Marxism and Soviet Communism.)

A Catholic, an élitist, and a man proud of the profession of arms, Lewis paradoxically lived in an often radical, puritan, and pacifist country. He remains a man of sometimes bewildering contradictions and uncertain motivation.[3] But Lewis had immense influence within the Welsh-speaking community, although (illustrating the divisions of the country) Anglo-Welsh attitudes to him ranged from incomprehension to indifference.

In response to Lewis's 1962 address, some younger Welsh Nationalists formed the Welsh Language Society *(Cymdeithas yr Iath Cymraeg)*—a militant group of activists which has campaigned, often successfully, for a new emphasis on Welsh by national and local government in Wales. The Society was also instrumental in mounting a campaign which resulted in the creation of the Welsh TV channel S4C in 1982. Its policy in what it sees as defence of the language is described as non-violent civil disobedience.

Both *Plaid Cymru* and the Welsh Language Society have condemned the current wave of arson attacks against "second homes" by *Meibion Glyndwr* (Sons of Glendower). Of this shadowy activist group virtually nothing seems to be known—least of all perhaps by the authorities, for there have been no arrests in a campaign that began as long ago as 1980. But recourse to violence is very much the exception rather than the rule in modern Welsh history.

PERHAPS THE MOST INTRIGUING aspect of public life in Wales today is the continuing tension between the modernisation process in all its forms and the old way of life which still flourishes in the north and west. It is probably this tension, in a very broad sense, which lies at the bottom of the current activities of *Meibion Glyndwr*.

Even *Plaid Cymru* now seems to realise that the old objective of devolution carries less meaning. In March this year the *Plaid* President, Dafydd Ellis Thomas, stated that the Party no longer wanted straightforward devolution: even if implemented it would not give Wales sufficient powers. Instead, *Plaid Cymru* wants a Welsh Parliament which will have direct links to the European Community in Brussels. (Dr Thomas sees an analogy with Flanders, which has been given a Flemish-speaking parliament in Brussels as well as stronger links to the Community.)

No doubt such ideas are discounted by the Secretary of State for Wales, who rules over an increasingly powerful Welsh Office in Cardiff as more and more administrative functions are devolved from Whitehall. Peter Walker is seen in Wales as an impressive activist, a high-powered Westminster politician, a big-spending and big-government man—the antithesis of the usual identikit Thatcherite Cabinet Minister (and indeed it has been widely reported by political commentators that he may be relieved of his post in the next Cabinet reshuffle). His talents in attracting development funding are freely acknowledged, even by his political opponents—he acted as a broker, for example, in the new Ford investment of £750 million at Bridgend between Cardiff and Swansea.

Some of Walker's Conservative predecessors in the Welsh Office in Cardiff have regarded investment as its own reward; he sees the current development drive as part of a grand design to make the Tories the largest political party in Wales by the end of the century. The older generation is understandably loyal to Labour for historical reasons, but younger people, he believes, see new investment as producing new opportunities and their political attitudes will change accordingly.

It is an ambitious vision, reminiscent of the 19th-century optimism of the coal and iron masters who first industrialised south Wales. The voting figures suggest, however, that political transformation may take longer than Walker anticipates. In the meantime his long-term "Valleys Initiative" envisages the regeneration of industrial south Wales through a mixture of public and private investment.

The enduring paradox of this development process, to which all British governments since 1945 have been committed, is that it is seen by the traditionalist defenders of the indigenous language and culture as a possible threat. Take, for example, the current development of communications, which includes the possibility of a second Severn Bridge. For many years all Welsh political parties have pressed Whitehall for more and better roads—a development regarded as vital, especially as a partial long-term solution to unemployment. In due course, therefore, the M4 motorway snaked westwards to Pont Abraham (Abraham's Bridge) between Swansea and Carmarthen. A dual-carriageway extension, almost indistinguishable from the motorway, has been pushed further west, almost to the Pembrokeshire border.

The motorway and its extension have had a revolutionary effect on travel. It is now possible to drive from London to

[3] See the excellent pioneering study by Bruce Griffiths, *Saunders Lewis* (1979). An objective English-language biography, by someone who knows both the Welsh language and the Welsh background intimately, is badly needed.

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West Wales in under four hours—not so long ago it was a whole day's boring, tiring experience. Yet there was a neat logic in the Welsh Language Society's demonstration at Pont Abraham earlier this year. The Society claims, probably rightly, that the M4 has meant inflated property prices and many more "second homes" in west Wales.

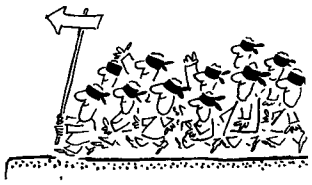
This attitude is understandable, but so also are the desires of "the newcomers". As life gets more uncomfortable in the great English conurbations, aspiring incomers flock to rural Wales. All the year round, estate agents' offices in the small, unchanged country towns throughout north and west Wales are filled with prospective property-buyers. One of the major attractions is the formal beauty and remoteness of the Cambrian Mountains and their many outliers, still unsullied as when George Borrow walked them in 1854. This little-publicised region is an incomparable paradise for naturalists, wildlife enthusiasts, and country pursuits of every sort. Current media concern with conservation and green issues generally adds to the pressure.

All these complex cultural tensions and political cross-currents are destined to remain for a very long time on the Welsh scene, although political cut-and-thrust is really secondary to the conflict between deep-rooted cultural nationalism and the increasingly strong phenomenon of development–and–modernisation. But the indigenous language and its associated cultural activities have a resilience that is not always readily apparent. Change will indeed come to Wales—but perhaps not so quickly as elsewhere.

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

The Le Pen Syndrome



ONE HOPES that the recent unexpected success of the extreme Right in West Berlin will not, in France, unleash the usual outcry about a supposed Nazi revival in Germany. The leader of the so-called "Republican" Party may be a former member of the *Waffen SS,* but the Party itself and those who voted for it are typically *lepéniste* (as we say in France, alluding to our domestic product). They have nothing to do with the major totalitarian ideologies of the pre-War period. Let us not repeat the mistake that was made over Le Pen, when certain otherwise intelligent politicians drew a comparison between France in 1984 and Germany in 1933, opining that "Hitler, too, had small beginnings . . . ."

The short-lived rise of Le Pen was due in part to a refusal to analyse the real social and cultural causes behind his appearance on the scene. Hence our inability to eradicate them. The causes of the electoral successes of the Republicans in Berlin are the same: friction between immigrant and host populations in a poverty-striken urban milieu, exacerbated by the spectre of drugs, AIDS, and insecurity.

Typically the Republicans, just like our "National Front", obtained their votes in the most deprived areas, where an immigrant element in excess of 11% shatters the well-known threshold of toleration. In such a setting, the virus of xenophobia spreads fast. On top of these general conditions there are the specific peculiarities of West Berlin as an oasis of so-called "alternative" culture, a place of refuge for the quadragenarian dregs of a senile '68-ism. What must the indigenous workers think of the young Left-wingers who come to West Berlin—where the federal police cannot touch them—purely to get out of doing military service in the Federal Republic? With the strike at Berlin University, with non-stop street demonstrations to demand (if you please) the suppression of the World Bank, and with their apologia for drug-taking, the German Alternatives combine all the elements that provoke working-class anger and contempt. It is these banal causes of the surge in the far-Right vote that ought to have occurred to people.

But that is just what the major parties have not done, any more than they did in France. It is the classic bind: the *CDU*, the party in power, has not dared to launch a serious attack on the problems of illegal immigrants, insecurity, and drugs for fear of being labelled Fascist by the *SPD*; the *SPD* itself lives in terror of the identical accusation from its youthful Left, the *"Jusos";* and the *"Jusos"* are paralysed in their turn by the clamouring of the Alternatives. Moreover, both *"Jusos"* and *SPD* also benefit from the protest vote, which, however cast, stems above all from the disillusioned, the desperate, and the misunderstood. Although the proportional system works to their advantage, with their 7.5% the Republicans are still a long way short of the 14.61% that Le Pen achieved nationally in the presidential election or the 26.39% that he scored in the Marseille *département* of Bouches-du-Rhône. However, there is a possibility of their spreading in West Germany, notably in Bavaria, for one specific reason, and that is the "Europophobia" of certain social classes, which is something we also have in France. On top of this there is the peculiarly uncomfortable position of a divided Germany and a public opinion that has lost its bearings in the new strategic equilibrium currently emerging between East and West.

Unlike the French National Front, the Republicans are neutralist, as are the Alternatives and part of the *SPD*. The point is, there will be no Europe if Germany leaves it. That is the real danger, and France has a key role to play in averting it. Joseph Rovan argues convincingly to this effect in a profound book on Franco-German relations that appears at a very apt moment.[1] Currently, he says, France does not know how to give the sorts of signal that would make Germany's attachment to the West irreversible "Two nations, one future": vague utterances about Europe will become verities only when France once again has a German policy.

[1] *France-Allemagne, deux nations, un avenir.* By JOSEPH ROVAN. Julliard.

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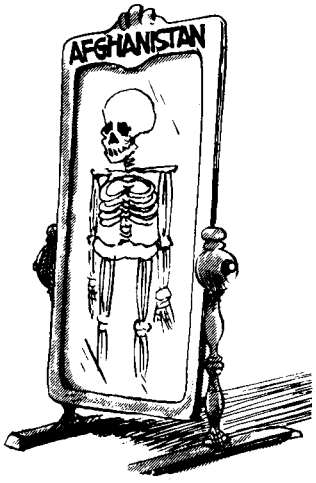
The Face of Barbarism



NOW THAT the last regiments of the Red Army have left Afghanistan and Soviet diplomacy is still making strenuous efforts to retain some influence in the region in spite of the catastrophe, let us give a little thought to the lessons of this war.

Let us remember first of all that it broke out at a time when the entire Western world had nothing but praise for the peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union and the spirit of *détente* emanating from it. Following the SALT I agreements on arms limitation signed in 1972 and the 1975 Helsinki accords, the USA and the USSR had just signed the SALT II agreements in Vienna in the spring of 1979. Carter had marked the occasion by kissing Brezhnev on the cheek.

Shortly before this, the American President, bowing to Soviet pressure, had cancelled his plans for the neutron bomb. Meanwhile, crisis or no crisis, economic aid was flowing unchecked. One or two ominous signs—the deployment of SS20 missiles in Eastern Europe, Communist coups in Africa and Central America—failed to dent the Western leaders' faith in *détente*. The Soviets, it was thought, harboured no aggressive, expansionist aspirations. When they invaded Afghanistan, President Carter, so he tells us, lost all his illusions overnight. Plenty of others retained theirs intact.

Let us then recall that, all those inexhaustible clichés notwithstanding, the war in Afghanistan had nothing, so far as its origins were concerned, to do with the war in Viet Nam. The Americans intervened in Viet Nam because the Communist North violated the Geneva accords of 1954 by destabilising and attempting to penetrate the South. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan purely in a spirit of conquest, to turn the country into a satellite. It is nice of them to offer to avert the (alas, very real) risk of a bloodbath following their departure. But it is rather as if Adolf Hitler had tendered his good offices in 1944 to ward off the danger of civil war in France.

Lastly, let us not forget that the war in Afghanistan was a monstrous regression into barbarism. While the defenders of human rights were busy harassing cricket and rugby players who had played in South Africa, the Red Army in Afghanistan was equalling some of the starriest exploits in recorded history: methodical extermination of civilian populations, flattened villages, booby-trapped playthings parachuted in to kill children, and the use (now confirmed) of chemical weapons, which they had also deployed in Cambodia and Laos. Afghan deaths in this war number between one and one-and-a-half million, most of them civilians. To escape massacre there was only one solution: flight into

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exile. There was a huge exodus, with some five million Afghans seeking refuge in Pakistan or Iran (one in two refugees in the world today is an Afghan). The population, which once stood at fourteen million, is now down to seven million. Moreover, the atrocities continued after March 1985, under the "enlightened" leadership of Mikhail Gorbachov. It was he, too, who ordered the final set-piece: the massive bombardments that began in November 1986, again hitting mostly civilians. Nor is it even over now, for the Soviets have left hundreds of thousands of landmines behind them.

The decade now drawing to a close has been a real feast of human rights as far as Asia is concerned. Tot up the executions carried out by the Islamic régime in Iran, the repressive massacres in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, and Tibet, the toll of the Afghan war, and Iraq's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, and you have to accept a figure of something like ten million non-combatant victims of these barbaric conflicts. Crimes against humanity did not cease in 1945.

J.-F.R.

Bagpipes, Sitars, & Mickey Mouse

By Gerry Farrell

OCCASIONALLY myths and fashion exist in tandem. They feed off each other. This symbiosis can ultimately render them indistinguishable. For a brief time in the 1960s, Indian classical music was a fashionable adjunct to popular culture. The involvement of the Beatles with Indian music, religion and philosophy started an avalanche of such experiments in the pop world. The *sitar* was heard in the background and general texture of recordings by many leading bands of the day—Ravi Shankar, the great Indian musician, aptly termed this phase in Western pop music "the sitar explosion". It became a fashion, but a fashion with a ready-made element of mythology built in. Stories started to circulate about how Indian musicians learned their craft: the long hours in painful, yogic positions, the raw and bleeding fingertips, the stoical dedication of the pupils, the strict, almost brutal methodology of the teachers. It was a tantalising, barely glimpsed mosaic of astonishing will and self-discipline. A central ingredient of this myth was some concept of "the search" (or, in Peter Matthiessen's telling phrase, "spiritual ambition")—the inner journey projected outwards, preferably in the sunshine. No one, it seemed, was supposed to return from that journey unchanged.

This became an important dimension of the myth for the Westerner seeking to learn Indian music, as was the idea of the Journey to the East (an image beloved of tour operators as well as aspiring mystics)—as if the essence of Indian music could be discovered and experienced only within a particular geographical location. It seems rather like saying that you have to go to Scotland to learn the bagpipes. . . .

It so happens that in the 1960s, amid unemployment, gang violence, and general greyness, my brother was scouring Glasgow for a *sitar.* (Bagpipes were just as difficult to locate.) He already had the sound: down the airwaves on a transistor radio, crackling out on a Dansette record-player, and, most important, in his head. But he wanted the object. He found it too, eventually. Imagine a *sitar* next to a Hoovermatic washing machine or a three-piece suite in a council-house living-room, the sound of a *sitar* alongside the football results heard from the next room, the *sitar* lying on the linoleum of the kitchen floor—the "*otherness*" of it. It was both popular and mythical, dovetailing the ordinary with the exceptional.

Indian music became part of my musical-cultural baggage along with Blues, Jazz, Rock & Roll, Jimmy Shand, and a few snippets of Tchaikovsky and Mozart. It belonged in the house just as surely as the *Evening Times,* Littlewoods pools, the TV, and EPs of the Everly Brothers. Later, I would search through libraries for obscure books on Indian music. I enjoyed letting the half-understood terminology spark my imagination: *shruti, raga, vadi, samvadi, tala, shudda, komal, tivra.* The resonance of the words alone was magical. The names of the *ragas* were sound-capsules pregnant with meaning and possibilities, matrices of myth: *Todi, Marva, Jaijaivanti, Darbari Kanara, Miyan Ki Malhar.* There were *ragas* for different times of the day, for different seasons, *ragas* that induced rain and fire, that melted stones. There were notes, it seemed, that mimicked the cries of animals or expressed joy, eroticism, and longing.

I pored over the books for years, losing interest and then returning once more to look at the faded, grainy photographs of strange-shaped instruments and their players. But the more I read those texts, the less I understood about Indian music. Somehow I wanted it to remain out of touch, magical and mythical. I lost touch with the original arc of populism and technology that had linked India to Glasgow.

The taste for Indian music in popular culture passed, and it was only some time later that I started to learn the *sitar.* Until then I had been experimenting with my guitar, retuning it to sound like a *sitar,* bending the strings, and frequently breaking them. I'd been filling my ears with everything from John Coltrane to Mahler, but I kept coming back to Indian music to savour the myth, the mystery. After a while I started on the road to becoming a "serious" musician, (is there any other kind?) However, despite the hours of practice—with sore fingers, and brain to match—the myth was still there ticking away at the back of my head. In some way I expected the details of that myth to be confirmed when I finally made my own Journey to the East (i.e. went to Heathrow, and got on a cheap flight to India).

During my first night in Delhi, watching the TV with its

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endless new bulletins of floods, failed crops, and clips from Bombay movies, I felt further away from Indian music than ever. I flicked through the stations on the radio in search of it, and found myself on a static-torn travelogue of every popular music form on the sub-continent, with occasional forays into Afghanistan and the Middle East. Eventually Indian classical music turned up and, catching the liquid, transparent sounds of the *sitar,* I crouched over the radio trying to tune it in more clearly. It was as if a shadow had entered the hotel room—the shadow of my brother all those years before, grappling with the tuning dial on his transistor in an attempt to pick up the faint signals of pirate radio stations on which, occasionally, Indian music was played. Reception was no better in Delhi than it had been in Glasgow.

Now the layers started to fall away from the myth, revealing an India and its music infinitely more familiar than I had suspected, but none the less still complex and contradictory. For example, one incident keeps returning to me from the period when I was having *sitar* lessons at a small University town in the countryside of West Bengal, 70 miles north of Calcutta, (which sometimes seemed to me like an overcrowded version of Glasgow on speed with sunshine).

IT WAS A CLOSE, hot evening, and as I made my way along the unlit lanes on the lookout for snakes and mad dogs I heard the sound of my teacher's *sitar* drifting on the air. He was playing the evening *raga, Yaman,* which he was also teaching me. I stopped outside his house to listen. With the heavy scents of the undergrowth and the delicately spun music, it was, for a moment, the embodiment of India.

The lesson that evening was particularly long and detailed, exploring the mind-twisting mathematical permutations, rhythmic and melodic, that lie at the heart of Indian music. Afterwards we were both tired. I got out the cigarettes; he had one of my ready-rolled, and I one of his hand-rolled. Over the months this exchange of tobacco after lessons seemed to have become some sort of ritual. He lay back on the cushions of the sofa and took a long draw, holding the cigarette cupped in his hand as if it were a joint; then he picked up a crude little plastic slide-projector which he stared into, laughing until tears streamed down his face.

He handed it to me. I looked inside to see cartoons of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and the rest. They moved jerkily and unevenly when you turned a small handle at the side. My teacher explained that these were given to him by his American students, who purchased new sets of slides at the airport each time they came over. We spent the rest of the evening looking through his sizeable collection of slides and collapsing into ever more hysterical laughter.

Walking back to my rooms that evening, I stumbled over the remains of a broken-down red postbox in the darkness. Sitting down to rub my shin, I pondered the perplexing crossovers between Indian *ragas,* Mickey Mouse, and the relics of the British Raj. Then my paranoia about deadly reptiles and hounds with slavering jaws caused me to rise briskly and go home.

There were many incidents like that: bewildering, baffling, amusing cultural interludes that filled in the spaces while I was learning Indian music. The young man on the Delhi-Calcutta express, for instance. He spent hours trying to make me believe that the Beatles were born not in Liverpool but in Howrah, a suburb of Calcutta. After spending so long in a railway carriage with him I was almost convinced too.

IT WAS A REVERSE culture shock—I was surprised to encounter so much that was familiar, and the confirmation of an emotional response first experienced in Glasgow of the 1960s. And as this happened, another edifice of mythical images collapsed: the glossy soft-focus colour plates of things Indian, the unnatural sheen of the constant sunlight, the colourful squalor, wise old men and timelessness, straight-backed women walking to the river at dawn, balancing copper pots on their heads, the sound of a *sitar* in the hot evening air—in short, the tinsel of a million Journeys to the East. . . . On some level, it was all still like that but with a new and refreshing perspective, with the background filled in, as it were. Here was a place called India where real people lived, swarmed on and off buses, ate fast food in the centre of Delhi, cursed about the transport system and the government, watched too much TV, consumed large quantities of movies, spoke hundreds of languages, worshipped lots of gods or no gods at all, and occasionally played *sitars* and *tablas.*

It seemed that Indian classical music was no more or less quintessentially Indian than, say, McDowell's Pizza House on Connaught Place or Campa Cola. My study of Indian music had taught me something else apart from *ragas*: that the idea of some cultural artefacts being more "valuable" than others can often lead to a long and unrequited love affair with exoticism and cultural fetishism. Indeed, this was the central feature of the '60s encounter with Indian music and culture.

For me now, Indian music is primarily about abstract musical structures, not an exercise in culture-hopping. Indian music transcends its cultural context as cognitive form. It becomes questionable, in the last decades of the 20th century, whether it is even desirable to speak of distinct musical cultures at all, or to work with the idea of a music being hermetically sealed within specific cultural references. When I first heard Indian music back in Glasgow it was simultaneously becoming a cultural fact for millions of pop fans in the Western world—for better or worse, technology had let it loose and thrown it up for grabs. All fashions change, but the waves set in motion continue—going out, coming back again. Just like Indian music.

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A Special Book Section

Literature & Criticism

Prejudice in Poetry

On Eliot & Pound—By STEPHEN WILSON

"WE MAKE OUT OF the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry", wrote W. B. Yeats, calling into question the distinction between the two modes of discourse.[1] In *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*,[2] Christopher Ricks concludes that this distinction hangs on the issue of responsibility:

> "Rhetoric, being entirely instrumental, asks no questions. This is not irresponsible of it, but is a consequence of its being a-responsible. Art, though, does not exempt from its 'suspicious and interrogating eye' its own procedures; art has eyes not only in the back of its head but also into the back of its head. The evil to which rhetoric may be put is not conceived of by the artist as something external to himself."

Art notwithstanding, the drowned Phoenician sailor of *The Waste Land* has no eyes to see in his watery grave—only pearls; and his unfortunate Jewish *Doppelganger*'s bulging eyeballs are in the process of being eaten away by crabs.[3] Ricks judges the ugliest touch of anti-Semitism in Eliot's poetry to be the first stanza of "Dirge", posthumously published with the manuscript of *The Waste Land* in 1971.

> *Full fathom five your Bleistein lies*
> *Under the flatfish and the squids.*
> *Graves' Disease in a dead jew's eyes!*
> *Where the crabs have eat the lids.*
> *Lower than the wharf rats dive*
> *Though he suffer a sea-change*
> *Still expensive rich and strange . . . .*

All the elements of unselfconscious, vicious, anti-Jewish race-prejudice are here displayed—the association with slimy tentacular invertebrates, the overt link with vermin, the covert rhyme-suggestion of "yids", the apprehensive and envious conjunction of alien mystery with wealth and riches, and most notably the insistence that these characteristics are ineradicable and resist even the transforming processes of death. It was the immutability of the Jewish stigma that marked off modern biological anti-Semitism from its medieval counterpart (where conversion through taking the creed offered a remedy) and provided a "public-health" justification for Hitler's "Final Solution".

Ezra Pound jotted on the manuscript of "Dirge" "??doubtful", and Eliot added "man's" above "jew's" in a transitional draft. Can we infer that Eliot's "dead jew" almost acquired the full status of a man, only to be dehumanised once again in the final version? Was he at some stage conceived by the artist as "internal to himself" only to be rapidly evacuated? And were his eyes eaten out in order to avoid being met, the better to blind Eliot's conscience to his own inhumanity? The "drowned Phoenician Sailor", "a dead jew", and "a dead man" are all homologues of "thy father" in Ariel's song, and this strongly suggested to William Empson where to look in Eliot's world for the object stimulating his hatred.[4]

In 1940 Eliot had written: "The Jewish religion is unfortunately not a very portable one, and shorn of its traditional practices, observances and Messianism, it tends to become a mild and colourless form of Unitarianism." Christopher Ricks comments:

> "The intersection of the Jewish and the Unitarian in this letter of Eliot's corroborates William Empson's inspired interpretation of the anti-Semitic impulses in the Waste Land manuscript (which harbours 'Dirge') as intimate with Eliot's repudiation of his father and of his father's religion."

Such an analysis is entirely consistent with the kind of self-

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[1] *"Per Amica Silenta Lunae: Anima Hominis"* (1917), in *Mythologies* (1959, 1969), p. 331.

[2] *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice.* By CHRISTOPHER RICKS. Faber and Faber, £15.00.

[3] The prototype for these eyeball-eating crustaceans is said to have been Tristan Corbière's *"Le Bossu Bitor"*, (*Gens de Mer*, 1861-68). Corbière, a chronic arthritic, relates the story of a hunchback who, after having intercourse, is tossed in a bedspread by prostitutes. The hunchback subsequently drowns himself out of shame, his wretched body having "known love": *"Un cadavre bossu, ballonné, démasqué / Par les crabes. Et ça fut jeté sur le quai."*

[4] William Empson, *Using Biography* (1984), pp. 196-87.

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scrutiny that Eliot aspired toward, and which is so difficult to reconcile with his bigotry. Thus in 1935 Eliot wrote:

> "The Church offers today the last asylum for one type of mind which the Middle Ages would hardly have expected to find among the faithful: that of the sceptic. Obviously I mean by sceptic, the man who suspects the origins of his own beliefs, as well as those of others; who is most suspicious of those which are passionately held: who is still more relentless towards his own beliefs than toward those of others; who suspects other people's motives because he has learned the deceitfulness of his own. . . ."[5]

Yet one year later, he permitted an unsigned review to appear in *The Criterion*:

> "More particularly, it is noticeable that the jacket of the book speaks of the 'extermination' of the Jews in Germany, whereas the title-page refers only to their 'persecution'; and as the title-page is to the jacket, so are the contents to the title-page, especially in the chapter devoted to the ill-treatment of Jews in German concentration camps."[6]

We do make poetry out of the quarrel with ourselves, but we also make other things: neuroses, psychoses, addictions, perversions, religion, and prejudice. Eliot's prejudice was no inconsequential epiphenomenon, floating in the ether of social convention, but something inherent in his life and work. "Dirge" was never published, to Eliot's credit: "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" was, to his shame.

THE DIFFICULTY for Eliot apologists in coming to terms with this, highlights the more general problem of prejudice with which Eliot was much preoccupied. Our perception of external reality is always coloured by preconception and expectation, and it is the subtle interplay of these *a priori* conditions with external stimuli that determines the form of experience. When Pound, for example, in a tantrum of frustration, rants about Englishmen being "vermin", "spirochetes" and "pimps", with "a talent for servility, sycophancy and bootlicking", the mud does not stick. In the absence of a preconceived stereotype, his vitriol is neutralised, reduced to the absurd.[7]

In aesthetics the problem revolves around our need to conjoin the "beautiful" with the "good". If the juxtaposition of "badness" with pleasing form always resulted in kitsch,[8] there would be no difficulty, we could invariably reject the art-work in question; but this is not the case. Our aesthetic response is disturbed precisely when we find unacceptable content embodied in compelling beauty—our preconceptions are violated.

[5] T. S. Eliot, *Time & Tide,* 5 January 1935.
[6] T. S. Eliot, in *The Criterion,* Vol. XV (1936), pp. 759-60.
[7] See E. Fuller Torrey, *The Roots of Treason: Ezra Pound and the Secrets of St Elizabeth's* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984) p.130.
[8] See Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (Harper & Row, 1984).

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"It is better [Ricks says], not only as ultimately more complimentary to the best in Eliot but also as more illuminating of the poems and the depth of their life, to acknowledge that in so far as Eliot's poems are tinged with anti-Semitism, this—though lamentable—is not easily or neatly to be severed from things for which the poetry is not to be deplored or forgiven but actively praised."

IF ELIOT'S MIND was tinged with anti-Semitism, Ezra Pound's was engulfed by it, thus magnifying the quandary for appreciation of his poetry. It is this dilemma that provides the impetus for Robert Casillo's *The Genealogy of Demons*.[9] Having come to Pound's graveside in Venice, in order to pay homage and acknowledge his educational debt, Casillo was struck by the unholy contradiction:

"In spite of my admiration for Pound as a cultural figure, I had not forgotten his association with some of the most brutal and dehumanising ideologies of this century and the inseparable relation between these ideologies and his major poem. Nor could I forget that Pound, for all his love of Italy and desire for its 'resurrection', as he called it, had served a regime which brought the country to degradation."

The Genealogy of Demons links the personal development of Pound's anti-Semitism with the ideological ground that made it possible. In contrast to Christian anti-Semitism, rooted in the Middle Ages, which hinged on accusations of deicide and blood-libel, Voltaire—the "patron saint" of modern anti-Semities—saw classical paganism as the authentic basis for Western European culture. Since Judaism was implacably opposed to pagan values, it was inherently alien to the West and thus unredeemable. It belonged to "the Orient" and as such was hopelessly backward, "historically arrested", and primitively attached to "code-worship". Nevertheless, Judaism was also (according to the German ethnologist and explorer Leo Frobenius) identified with modern Western rationalism, commercialism, and liberal civilisation as opposed to the simple agrarian-based culture of pre-industrial times. The Jews were therefore responsible for having torn men away from the earth.

Pound embraced all these ideas, and in addition gave credence to the notion of a "Jewish Conspiracy" for world domination, as adumbrated in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—that infamous turn-of-the-century Russian forgery, promoted and distributed widely in the 1920s by Nazi sympathisers.[10] In fact, as Casillo demonstrates, these ideas came to dominate Pound's work and form "the deep structure of the Poundian worldview".

What emerges is a picture of deep-seated intellectual and emotional confusion, where Fascism is seen as a life-affirming force, creating order and clarity, while "the Jews" are the epitome of destructiveness, promoting conflict and ultimately representing the disintegration of all values into an undifferentiated miasma. Pound's reaction to the character of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* spells this out quite clearly: "Ulysses is a summary of pre-war Europe", he wrote in 1933, "the blackness and mess and muddle of a 'civilisation' led by disguised forces and a bought press the general sloppiness, the plight of the individual intelligence in that mess! Bloom very much *is* the mess."[11]

"The swamp", we are reminded, had a profound significance for the fascist mind, and there are many examples in Pound's writing where he invokes this imagery.[12] Thus in 1942 he speaks of the Jews as a "poison" which "already by the time of Scotus Erigena . . . had begun to make a bog of things". The same Jews are also held responsible for all the oppressive restrictions imposed upon behaviour by Christian ethics! "Throughout Pound's writings", Casillo shows us:

". . . as throughout Enlightenment and Orientalist anti-Semitism, one encounters a sinister, contradictory, and finally paradoxical image of the Jews. Like the Near East, they combine but never reconcile the qualities of Nature and anti-Nature, passivity and aggressiveness, fertility and sterility, abstraction and materialism, the patriarchal and the matriarchal, the masculine (Jehovah) and the feminine (Cybele), the anti-natural and the anti-historical, the desert and the swamp."

The range of loathsome and contradictory qualities which Pound managed to press "the Jews" into representing is indeed extraordinary—the only consistent characteristic appearing to be their troublesome nature as incubi that he himself needed to expel. They testify, as Casillo says, "not to any confusion in the Jewish 'object'", but rather to the uncertain elements of Pound's own identity.

It is, for example, a fine irony to hear Pound in Canto 35 railing against Jewish cowardice, as represented by "Mr Corles" who, as a "commander of machine guns" left his post but escaped court martial by having his family send him to a "mind sanitorium". In reality, it was Pound who in 1945 escaped trial for treason by being declared insane and unfit to plead. He was subsequently confined for thirteen years in St Elizabeth Hospital, where he continued to express fascist and anti-Semitic beliefs. On arriving in Italy after his release, he gave the Fascist salute to reporters and complained to friends about the "Jew Pork Herald Tribune".

By 1942 T. S. Eliot, then 54 years of age, had mellowed. His antipathy toward "free-thinking Jews", if still present, was no longer expressed. The tone of his poetry was no longer hectoring and superior, the innuendo of names

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[9] *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound*. By ROBERT CASILLO. Northwestern University Press, $34.95.

[10] See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1967, rev. ed. 1981).

[11] Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Faber, Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 319.

[12] Is it too far-fetched to note here that Pound's paternal grandmother, Sarah, was a descendant of the esteemed New England Loomis family? Pound was proud of his ancestry, but learnt while at college that his branch of the family was "rotten"—in fact Sarah's grandfather was a horse-thief and murderer, who led the Loomis Gang, notorious for terrorising the surrounding countryside from their ranch at Nine Mile Swamp, in upstate New York.

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(Rachel née Rabinovitch, Bleistein, etc.) had disappeared; the anti-Semitism of his earlier work had apparently gone. In its place came a sense of reflective acceptance, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and a regret most poignantly rendered in his poem *Little Gidding* in the last of the "gifts reserved for age".

> *And last, the rending pain of re-enactment*
> *Of all that you have done, and been; the shame*
> *Of motives late revealed, and the awareness*
> *Of things ill done and done to others' harm*
> *Which once you took for exercise of virtue.*

At the same time as Eliot wrote this, Pound's wartime propaganda broadcasts from Italy were in full flood, pouring out vituperative racist libel two or three times a week, blaming the Jews for both World Wars and for all else that was wrong with the world. Thus, on 9 April 1942:

> "I think Roosevelt belongs in an insane asylum now. His writers are lunatics. You have come down far when a Jew by the name of Finkelstein runs your country. . . . I don't want the United States to use Hawaii in the interest of a kike . . . the United States has been invaded by vermin. . . ."[13]

Pound's insight was longer in coming, and when it did, lacked the gentleness of Eliot's resignation. Canto 116, written in his seventy-fifth year,[14] is a harrowing and beautiful record of the struggle:

> *I have brought the great ball of Crystal;*
> *who can lift it?*
> *Can you enter the great acorn of light?*
> *But the beauty is not the madness*
> *Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.*
> *And I am not a demigod,*
> *I cannot make it cohere*
> *If love be not in the house there is nothing.*
> *The voice of famine unheard.*
> *How came beauty against this blackness. . . .*
>
> *To confess wrong without losing rightness:*
> *Charity I have had sometimes,*
> *I cannot make it flow thru.*
> *A little light, like a rushlight*
> *to lead back to splendour.*

Here indeed we can see poetry, not propaganda, being made out of Pound's inner struggle. Perhaps his best work? But the cost would appear to have been high, for his last years were bedevilled by intractable melancholia, the struggle to take responsibility for his "wrecks" apparently lost. In 1967, Allen Ginsberg, the American, Jewish, Buddhist poet, visited him in Venice, bringing marijuana and Beatles records. In a surrealist scene, he coaxed the monosyllabic and depressed octogenarian into a conversation; whereupon Pound, having spent a lifetime inciting others into hatred of the Jews, and more than two decades after the Holocaust, uttered one often-quoted line repudiating

[13] See E. Fuller Torrey, *The Roots of Treason*, pp. 264, 162.
[14] Ezra Pound, *Selected Cantos* (New Directions, 1966).

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anti-Semitism—"But the worst mistake I made was that stupid, suburban prejudice. . . ."[15]

Does any of this matter, now that prejudice is no longer chic in literary circles? Now that we are all "Jews", all uprooted (and not like the camps of the early modernists, "full of fascists, fascist sympathisers and other lovers of on-time trains"), it is alleged to be a fact that in contemporary society what writers say matters not a whit.[16]

This may have seemed comfortably and frustratingly true for liberal democracies, often thought of as somehow isolated from other political systems, but in the wake of the Salman Rushdie affair, the immense potential significance of what writers say must surely be acknowledged. It would appear, then, that we are not yet all "Jews", content to accommodate ourselves to the diaspora of uncertainty. Far from it. In the modern world, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism offers an anodyne to precisely the same human dilemmas that previously produced fascism.

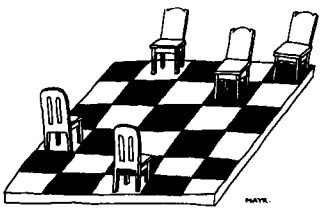
And does it matter for art, now that we are all post-modernists in poetry, taking for granted the Poundian revolution? Poets need to discern the nature of the interior material made available to them, and to know what they are doing with it. Anti-Semitism makes poetry bad, because it is predicated on a flight from internal reality. It gives expression not to a true conflict but to a false solution. It offers itself as "the King of Myths", the ultimate cliché—infinitely plastic, infinitely malleable, "the Jews" are capable of being made to symbolise anything, and imaginative work is thereby pre-empted. Mindless prejudice is, without doubt, the enemy of poetry.

[15] See Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character,* p. 899.

[16] See A. C. Graham, letter in *The Times Literary Supplement,* 18-24 November 1988; and W. H. Gass, "Review of A Serious Character", *The Times Literary Supplement,* 13-19 January 1989.

The Game of Life

On Georges Perec—By MAYA SLATER



THE FIRST impression on reading Perec's masterpiece, *Life: A User's Manual,*[1] is of a literary junk-shop kept by a witty, charming, eccentric collector of miscellanea. His treasures, worthless in themselves, acquire value by dint of being hoarded.

Life: A User's Manual is the story of an apartment house, 11 rue Simon-Crubellier. For 600 pages, Perec takes us through every room. We even inspect the mechanism of the lift, the sewers and dustbins. We see the pictures on the walls, the sardine heads and chicken bones, the antique bronzes and dozing cats. The inhabitants are glimpsed for an instant, frozen in the act of having a bath, reading a letter, cleaning an oriental dagger with a piece of chamois-leather. We are told many past histories and tall stories, such as the tale of the trapeze artist who finally preferred to die rather than descend from the Big Top.

But this patchwork of a novel is not just a series of amusing anecdotes loosely set in the house. It has an overall design and a complex mathematical patterning to it.[2] A pair of characters stand out: their activities form the principal action. The book is the story of the solving of a puzzle, of the failure of a lifetime's quest, of a long and cruel revenge, of a death.

Before we enter the house, Perec begins the novel with a foreword, a minutely detailed description of the problems involved in making a jigsaw puzzle and then solving it. His words are almost portentous, and in case we should overlook them he will repeat them later in the novel:

> ". . . a puzzle . . . is not a sum of elements to be distinguished from each other and analysed discretely, but a pattern, that is to say a form, a structure."

What structure emerges when the puzzle-pieces of this novel are put together? The man doing the jigsaw is Bartlebooth, an eccentric English gentleman. He has planned an activity that will occupy him for the rest of his life. He wants his exertions to be unproductive, so he chooses to do jigsaws—not ordinary jigsaws, but a lifetime's creations, crafted with the help of the puzzle-maker Gaspard Winckler. What the jigsaws represent for Bartlebooth, how Winckler takes his strange, posthumous revenge, and why we are introduced to the house at this particular moment (17 June 1975, just before 8 p.m.) gradually becomes clear as we follow the threads weaving through the novel.

This structure invites the reader to pay close attention. It is clear from the start that the thousands of tiny details in the text are all leading somewhere; the novel appeals to the researcher in us. This incitement to attentive reading is one of Perec's greatest achievements. How does it work? A striking element is his use of time. Perec focuses

[1] *Life: A User's Manual.* By GEORGES PEREC. Translated by DAVID BELLOS. Collins Harvill, £4.95.

[2] For example, the chapters follow each other in a series of knight's moves, if one takes the plan of the apartment house as a 10 x 10 chessboard. See David Bellos, "Literary Quotations in Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi*", in *French Studies,* vol. XLI, no. 2 (April 1987), pp. 181-194, and Perec's own explanations in *Espèces d'espaces* (1974) and an article in the journal *L'Arc* (no. 76, 1979).

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on just one moment, as though the pause button has been pressed on a video. People are captured in a series of stills: their actions, even banal ones, take on an enigmatic, almost surreal quality: a door is open and gives on to a long corridor. A girl of barely eighteen is coming along it. She is naked. In her right hand she holds an egg. . . . We cannot take for granted the simplest statement because this freeze-frame technique has imbued it with mystery.

The process of description also focuses the attention. It is impressively scrupulous, as if the smallest detail might turn out to be a vital clue. One finds oneself concentrating for fear of missing something; and indeed, Perec slips in telling details, clues that reveal secrets both within this novel and about his other works. For instance, one of the tenants is clearly the hero of an earlier Perec novel, *Un Homme qui dort* (*A Sleeping Man*), published in 1967. This novel describes a young man's mental breakdown with moving directness, but we finish it without finding out what becomes of him. The novel ends inconclusively: "You are afraid, you are waiting. You are waiting in the Place de Clichy, for the rain to stop."[3] In *Life: A User's Manual* Perec returns to the hero of *Un Homme qui dort*, and we finally learn that he never managed to come to terms with the outside world, but instead disappeared mysteriously.[4]

Even the inanimate objects described in the novel invite us to find out more. Take the pictures on the walls, for instance. They have enigmatic titles: "Laborynthos" [*sic*]; their authors are pseudonymous: "UN Owen"; they contain mystifying details: "a book whose title can be seen—*The Unfinished Symphony*, a Novel—but whose author's name remains hidden". Or the painter's technique blurs our perceptions (Ingres's *Turkish Bath* has extra steam painted on so that the figures become indistinct). Or the subject-matter is simply bewildering: a whole series of vivid, realistic pictures are described in impossibly minute detail (how can a painter show how much mustard is in a sandwich, or what is written on a railway-ticket?). These improbable pictures are placed on inappropriate walls:

> "Madame Altamont's boudoir. A dark and intimate room with oak woodwork, silk hangings, and heavy grey velvet curtains. . . . Above the divan hangs a hyper-realist canvas portraying a steaming plate of spaghetti and a packet of Van Houten cocoa."

Perec treats painting in a characteristically cryptic fashion: pictures fascinate him because they pose logical, intellectual problems.[5]

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[3] Translations from *Life: A User's Manual* and *W* are by David Bellos; the rest are mine.

[4] In *Espèces d'espaces*, Perec makes it clear that this character is in part autobiographical.

[5] The obsessive character of this approach will be clear to readers of *Un Cabinet d'amateur* (*An Art-Lover's Collection*, 1979). This is a book about a mysterious imaginary painting, which itself incorporates many other paintings. The story tells of the private view and explains in minute detail what happens to this particular painting and to the art-lover's other works. *Life: A User's Manual* gives the impression of detail without taking the reality quite as far as this.

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At first, as one scrutinises the details of the furnishings in room after room of this imaginary apartment building, it is like looking at a marvellous doll's house; and as with a doll's house, one wants every item to be a perfect miniature of its real-life counterpart. But this house is not a realistic microcosm; it is an artificial, magical world. Many of the objects described are improbable, even impossible. What apartment house could bring together under one roof the bed of Napoleon I, a druid's sickle of gold, a bronze gong the size of J. Arthur Rank's and a full set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, doll's-house scale? The combination of minute detail and unreality is fascinating and disturbing.

PEREC is a literary writer, and uses literary allusions as clues. The house is full of books, some real, some imaginary. A detective story called *The Seven Crimes of Azincourt* lies on a bedside table, next to a book of crosswords. Informed Perec readers will recognise hints of the author's own life and works here: Perec composed books of crossword clues, and the thriller points to his own earlier novel *La Disparition* (1969), in which a series of crimes take place at Azincourt (though my count is six, not seven, even if you include the mysterious death of the goldfish Jonas). Sometimes he slips in a disguised quotation. Describing the devastation caused by a fire in one of the flats, he comments:

> "All that was recovered was a pearl bracelet that Monsieur Danglars had given his wife as a birthday present. He had bought it at the sale of a descendant of Madame de La Fayette, to whom it was given by Henrietta of England. The case it was kept in had stood up to the fire without damage, with the pearls completely black inside it."

Proustians will recognise a quotation from *A la Recherche du temps perdu* here; but Perec is not quoting Proust himself, he is quoting Proust's parody of the Goncourt Diaries, thereby giving us one literary allusion within another. Tiny details further subvert the Proustian original. Perec puts in a bracelet where Proust has a necklace, and adds his own surreal touch by making the jewel-case appear unscathed.[6]

It may seem that Perec is playing games with the reader here, and indeed the novel is consistently playful. His crosswords and jigsaws are accompanied by jokes, riddles and anecdotes—as though he felt impelled to entertain us without respite. Even the meticulous descriptions have their ludic side. Perec is naively honest: he sees the world with fresh eyes, viewing objects as if for the first time, and describes what he sees scrupulously. This honesty has its playful side: he delights us by the sheer skill with which he subjects ordinary things—tins of peas or cakes of soap—to rigorous scrutiny, turning them into works of art.

With people too his impartial tone seems imbued with calm good humour: he observes the vagaries of human nature, picking out amusing anecdotes without comment:

> ". . . a young student . . . had been kicked out of a vegetarian restaurant where he worked in the evenings after being caught pouring a big bottle of beef extract into the pot of simmering vegetable soup."

Perec concentrates on obsessives: eccentrics like James Sherwood who collects unique objects (a huge double bass that needs two players, one on a ladder, or Tarzan's first pair of drawers); Boris Kosciuszko, who claims that the greatest theatrical masterpieces in French were *Iphigénie* by Guimond de la Touche, *Agamemnon* by Népomucène Lemercier, and *Didon* by Lefranc de Pompignan; Anne Breidel, a schoolgirl who designs a tower so immense that it can pick up radio waves from the other side of the globe. At first reading, *Life: A User's Manual* is a marvellous commonplace book masquerading as a novel, a delight to read, funny, creative and cranky.

PEREC's most recently translated book, *W or The Memory of Childhood*,[7] casts a new light on *Life: A User's Manual*. *W* is also enthralling in itself. It is two books in one. The first is an adventure story, or rather two adventure stories, since the initial tale breaks off without reaching a conclusion. The hero is a certain Gaspard Winckler (readers of *Life: A User's Manual* will remember that Gaspard Winckler is also the vengeful manipulator, the mysterious toy-maker who causes the final downfall of Bartlebooth). But the story-teller of *W* is not the true Gaspard Winckler. His identity papers, bearing this name, really belong to a deaf-mute child. This child Gaspard has died in a mysterious shipwreck—or has he? The false Winckler's task is to find his namesake, who is probably alive somewhere in Tierra del Fuego.

At this point the story of Gaspard Winckler is abandoned, and the narrative changes abruptly into an account of a civilisation in Tierra del Fuego which is run like an Olympic sporting-village. Details of the régime are elaborately worked out, the competitive events, the life-style of the athletes, the system of rewards. The current winner of an event takes the name of the first ever winner (e.g. Kekkonen, Jones); in subsequent years he retains his sobriquet, but with added syllables (Kekkekonen, Jojones). When do we begin to realise that there is something sinister about this system? Gradually, as the details pile up, the horror begins to bite. The athletes are systematically starved, the women violated, the rules changed arbitrarily to create an atmosphere of fear. What began as a fantasy ends as a nightmare. Why?

Half-way through *W*, Perec tells us that this fantasy is based on an imaginary world which he himself created as a child. There is clearly some connection with his own life. And this brings me to the most moving part of the book.

[6] Perec's use of literary quotation is excessively complex. David Bellos, in "Literary Quotations in Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi*", demonstrates that the quotations are distributed throughout the novel according to a precise mathematical grid, so that readers can work out in advance where they should come.

[7] *W or the Memory of Childhood*. By GEORGES PEREC. Translated by DAVID BELLOS. Collins Harvill, £10.95.

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Wedged amongst the fantasy narrative are Perec's own efforts to come to terms with his past through autobiography. This is not easy for him. Born in France in 1936 of Polish Jewish parents, he lost his father at four. His mother was deported and gassed when he was six. He finds it painfully difficult to remember anything about his childhood. He describes with meticulous detail the few photographs he possesses of his parents and of himself as a child. His tone is dispassionate, but these fragmentary documents seem all the more poignant. Only occasionally does he allow himself to speculate about how damaged he must have been by events. He recalls with resentment how his teacher, thinking he had pushed a little girl, unpinned his medal for achievement, and comments: "I wonder if this memory does not in fact conceal its precise opposite: not the memory of a medal torn off, but the memory of a star pinned on." Some of the details are haunting, like the drawings he did in his early teens—aeroplanes with wings torn off, athletes with arms and legs floating free of their bodies, a child's depiction of a fragmented world which fails to function.

At the end of the book, the two threads, fantasy and autobiography, come together; Perec makes it clear that the community of athletes is inspired by the Nazi concentration camps. We have already begun to guess this as the officials start to shout their commands in German, and as the punishments meted out to the athletes become harsher. The resemblance between fiction and fact goes further than this. Even the death of Gaspard Winckler's mother in the shipwreck ("her bleeding fingernails had made deep scratches in the oak door") is paralleled with Perec's own observations on the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz: "I remember the photographs of the walls of the gas chambers showing scratchmarks made by the victims' fingernails."

I HAVE SAID that *W* enriches one's perception of *Life: A User's Manual.* Indeed, it adds a new dimension. Looking back at Perec's masterpiece, one realises that under the calm surface there runs a current of anguish and violence, initially obscured by the serenity and humour of the narrative. The many anecdotes that make up the novel are mostly stories of human misfortune, of death and disaster, often so bizarre that one forgets how tragic they are. Of the four young girls living in the apartment house, three are the daughters of murdered mothers, and the father of the fourth, it is hinted, will one day be shot by her mother. And the fantasy element that transforms the house into an enchanted palace has its sinister side. Ingeborg, the glamorous clairvoyant, may look like the Lorelei:

> ". . . a dazzling figure in a black, raw-silk ball gown with a long train . . . with a mink stole on her arm, a large fan made of black feathers . . . with . . . her long, perfectly oval face, her narrow, almost cruel eyes, her almost bloodless lips . . ."

But she dies a violent death at the hands of her husband. Mme Albin may seem like an amiable old eccentric (she forgot to put her false teeth in one morning and "she has not worn them again since then"), but when we meet her she has been ruined by war, and is unjustly victimised, mourning her dead and dying herself.

The distress that underlies *Life: A User's Manual* is, however, reflected only in the fictional parts of *W.* The autobiographical element in *W* brings something else to *Life: A User's Manual.* It helps one to understand the thoroughness of Perec's scrutiny. The orphan who has nothing left but five photographs examines them with a minuteness that clearly represents an intense, unvoiced longing. So, too, in *Life: A User's Manual*, photographs, writings, the contents of cupboards and bookcases are inspected and decoded systematically. This technique no longer seems like a light-hearted effort to submerge the reader in information, but an attempt on Perec's part to solve the mysteries of a hostile world by documenting them.

THIS NEED to pursue every topic to the limit, together with the compulsion to set puzzles (usually highly elaborate ones) and then to solve them, underlies all Perec's writing. Each of his published works represents a piece of research which will finally bear fruit when it is incorporated into his masterpiece. His prose is taut and exact, well-fitted to express complex thoughts clearly. The same workmanlike approach is apparent in his contributions to the writings of the Oulipo group, a literary movement which flourished in the '60s and included not only Perec but also Raymond Queneau, and whose stated aim was to write "obeying more or less constricting rules. . . . The very fact of beat-

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ing a record in one of these excessive structures can be sufficient to justify a work".[8]

Other Oulipians were flippant about Oulipo; Perec was characteristically dedicated: he once claimed that he practised exercises in writing like a pianist practising scales. For example, deciding that a palindrome was a challenging structure, he produced one over 5,000 letters long. He became interested in lipograms (texts written without using one or more letters of the alphabet), and produced a whole long novel, *La Disparition* (recently reissued by Denoël), without once using the letter E.

La Disparition is a murder story. The "disappearance" of the title is not just of the letter E but also of a series of characters, who either vanish or are murdered. The search for clues reveals further strange disappearances such as the fifth volume of a 26-volume encyclopaedia (clearly, the E volume). Other patterns with an apparent meaning emerge: the characters' names begin either with A or with O, alpha or omega; a word-play on "*blanc*" ("white" or "a blank") leads to patterning with white and black, light and dark, space empty or filled. Perec makes great use of the story within a story in this novel, delving deep into the past histories of the characters. He does the same in *Life: A User's Manual*, where every passing allusion is seized upon as an excuse for an anecdote, often a detective story in miniature.

Like his other works, *La Disparition* may have implications that are more serious than seem at first apparent. In the first place, why omit E, one of the most commonly used letters and one whose absence causes him extraordinary problems (he manages to include a mention of Raymond Queneau by calling him Quayno or Quinault, but his search for E-less synonyms for common words can become desperate)? A clue may be provided by an anonymous pencilled comment on the title-page of my library copy of *W*. *W* is dedicated by Perec to "E". My unknown commentator claims firstly that "E" is Perec's aunt Esther, who brought him up, and, secondly, that if the letter E is pronounced *à la française*, it becomes "*eux*", that is, "those" who were lost in the Holocaust. Is the vanished E of *La Disparition* also the lost "*eux*"?[9]

THAT PEREC is obsessed with the Holocaust is clear from another work, *La Boutique obscure* (1973). This is the transcription of 124 of his dreams. Several of them are set in a concentration camp, "the image of a camp, a dream-camp, a camp metaphor . . . as if I never did anything but dream of this camp". His scrupulousness in writing down these dreams, night after night, again conveys the impression of an attempt to pin reality down by documenting it. The attempt is more unusual in *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1975), probably best translated as *An Attempt to Exhaust the Possibilities of a Place in Paris*.[10] Perec sat in a café in the Place Saint-Sulpice for three solid days, looking out of the window and writing down everything he saw, however banal. For example:

> "A 63 passes, then an 87, an 86, another 86 and a 96. An old woman shades her eyes to see what number bus is coming (I can tell by her air of disappointment that she was wanting to take a 70)."

The book is almost unreadable; yet it contains a fascinating variant of the idea that is the mainspring of *Life: A User's Manual*. In *Tentative d'épuisement* he takes a single spot, and observes it over several days. In *Life: A User's Manual* he turns the idea on its head, and takes a multiple setting, but observed at one instant in time. It was by means of such experiments, pushing his ideas to their limits, that Perec acquired the material for his masterpiece.

ONE OF PEREC'S most innovative traits is his interest in styles in living. This aspect, too, is thoroughly examined in one work. His first novel, *Les Choses* (1965),[11] tells how the need to follow the fashion in interior design, clothes and life-style becomes a destructive obsession with a typical young couple. They are forced by the pressures of their image to give up their independence and become executives, which Perec sees as a capitulation. Many authors are strangely reluctant to write in detail about trends in modern living—perhaps they feel it is too frivolous, or perhaps their eye is not in. But Perec is different. His sensitivity to style is exceptional: every telling detail is observed and reported. The life-styles of the characters in *Life: A User's Manual* are subjected to an equally piercing scrutiny. Indeed, some of the rooms described seem like an interior designer's ideal of perfection, though others resemble a wild extravaganza:

> "The walls were painted brilliant white gloss, and a similarly white plastic covering was put on the crusty old parquet floor. All the doors were bricked up except the one giving onto the entrance hall—originally a double door with glass panes, replaced by two sliding panels controlled by a hidden photo-electric cell. As for the windows, they were concealed behind tall plywood panels sheathed in white synthetic leather. . . . In the centre of this spotless, shadowless, and perfectly smooth white space, Fleury placed his table: a monumental marble slab, absolutely white, cut to an octagon, with bevelled edges, standing on a cylindrical pedestal one yard in diameter. Eight moulded plastic chairs, also white, completed the furniture."

The difference between *Life: A User's Manual* and *Les Choses* is in the tone. The early novel is serious and by implication didactic. Reading between the lines, one senses

[8] From the first manifesto of Oulipo, by Francois Le Lionnais, in *Oulipo: La Litterature potentielle* (Gallimard, 1973).

[9] Perec wrote another novel as a companion-piece to *La Disparition*. Entitled *Le Revenente*, it uses no vowels except E. Further suggestions as to the significance of "E" can be found in Claude Burgelin's article "Perec et la cruanté", in *Cahiers Georges Perec*, no. 1 (POL, Paris, 1984), p. 45.

[10] This work is a tiny part of a much larger project which Perec never completed. For details, see Warren F. Motte, Jr., *The Poetics of Experiment: A Study of the Work of Georges Perec* (French Forum, Lexington, 1984).

[11] Translated by Helen R. Lane (Grove Press, 1967).

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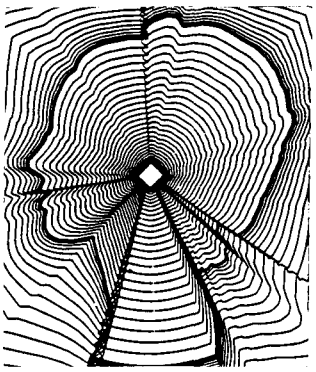
that to Perec the need to project an image is destructive and the consumer society pernicious. In *Life: A User's Manual*, he has acquired an impartial, uninvolved approach. He describes a huge variety of life-styles without passing judgment.

Undoubtedly, readers of Perec will see all his works as building up towards his masterpiece, *Life: A User's Manual*. Despite the flamboyant success of his strange Oulipo experiments, and the seemingly full-blown idiosyncrasy of his approach from the earliest novels, we see a considerable evolution and maturation in the sixteen years that constituted his short though prolific literary career. He started off with literary conjuring tricks for Oulipo, but very quickly discovered a personal, simple tone with *A Sleeping Man*. Thereafter each obsession was explored till it was exhausted: the Chinese game of *Go* and crosswords, as well as the art world and experiments with language. At the same time, Perec was delving into himself, his dreams, his melancholy, with scrupulous honesty, though without sentimentality. *Life: A User's Manual* and *W* represent the two sides of Perec in their final form. Perec has left us with one last, insoluble puzzle: had he not died prematurely, where would his extraordinary mind have taken him next?

Threads & Strands

Louis MacNeice, Freud, Lacan—By Ross Skelton



In recent times the psychoanalytic perspective in literature has been uncomfortably poised between the old Freudian reductionism and the new "punning algebra" of Jacques Lacan. It seems that we have grown dissatisfied with our home among the sexual symbols of Freud, but have not yet made ourselves comfortable in Lacan's house. In considering the poetry of Louis MacNeice, can Lacanian spirit be reconciled with Freudian letter?:

The image of thread appears and reappears in MacNeice's poetry. Analogously, wool, string, cord, wire and even rope occur and recur, from first poems to last.[1] In one of his earlier poems, "Trains in the Distance" (1926), we find:

> *Trains came threading quietly through my dozing childhood*
> *Gentle murmurs nosing though a summer quietude*
> *Drawing in and out, in and out, their smoky ribbons . . . .*

And in "Morning Sun" (1935):

> *Shuttles of trains going north, going south*
> *drawing threads of blue . . .*

To the image of thread has now been added the notion of a shuttle, implying the weaving of fabric, as also in "Valediction" (1934):

> *But I cannot deny my past to which myself is wed*
> *The woven figure cannot undo its thread.*

Perhaps most importantly, the image of a thread broken appears in "The Casualty" (1943):

> *. . . they will not sever*
> *That thread of so articulate silence.*

Ella Sharpe's *Dream Analysis*—a practical handbook for 1930s psychoanalysts—contains the following passage:

> "The shuttle symbolised the penis, the thread carried along by the shuttle symbolised the semen and the woven material resulting from the work of the shuttle symbolised the child. (The snapping of the thread in the shuttle, which in actual weaving caused a temporary cessation of work, symbolised castration.)"

At this point the reader is likely to sigh or even groan. Such crude and even violent reductions of poetic texts, one may feel, give psychoanalysis a bad name in literary criticism. Yet these Freudian reductions surely have something to offer.

Ella Sharpe lectured on literature before becoming a psychoanalyst. Her example of the loom is an interpretation of a dream as a sexual dream: but she does *not* regard this symbolism as universal, even though thread has significance in Greek mythology, in the hands of the Three Fates. She is at pains to point out that this dream of a loom is firmly rooted in the dreamer's personal history—it is an instance of individual symbolism.

This patient used to visit her great-aunt in the country; father, mother and child all slept together in a four-poster bed. She also visited silk-weaving looms in the district:

> ". . . she was fascinated by the swift flinging of the shuttle. The man sitting at the loom bending over his work and flinging the shuttle took over completely in fantasy the significance of scenes witnessed in infancy in the four-poster bed."[2]

The account is a model of how individuals find their own symbols in their early surroundings—a view first made clear

[1] The poems quoted in this article can be found in Louis MacNeice, *Collected Poems* (London, 1966), pp. 3, 26, 53, 245, 89-90, 37, 21, 435, 463, 176, 13, 226, 460, 350, 320.

[2] Ella Sharpe, *Dream Analysis* (London, 1937), p. 56.

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by Ernest Jones. In effect, each individual creates symbolism afresh, a point nicely brought out in Freud's remark to Bruno Goetz to the effect that the sea appeared in his poetry because either it symbolised something, or it was part of his childhood, or both.

IT IS IN THIS Freudian spirit that I should like to approach Louis MacNeice's poetry by focusing on the repetition of images and words as a psychoanalyst would in analysing the dreams of a patient. This procedure, of course, assumes that a dream and a poem are similar productions of the unconscious. In my view, each is a condensation of experience, with both latent and manifest contents: this complex issue is explored more fully in the works of Ella Sharpe.

The images of shuttle, thread, fabric, and broken thread may serve as a starting point for analysis. Given that a shuttle can be regarded as symbolising a phallus, it is no surprise to find it equated with a train in the early poems. The train is also used at times to represent sexual intercourse. In "Trilogy for X" (1938), we find:

> *My body in darkness, darling;*
> *Switch the light off and let me*
> *Gather you up and gather*
> *The power of trains advancing*
> *Further, advancing further*

And in the same poem:

> *Pigeons courting, the cock*
> *Like an eighteenth century marquis*
> *Puffing his breast and dragging*
> *His fantail waltzwise;*
> *O my love, the*
> *Southward trains are puffing.*

Although MacNeice thus uses the train image to represent intercourse, by means of a pun (or homonym) he subverts any such rigid, fixed interpretation. For example, in "Eclogue by a Five-barred Gate" (1934), Death speaks:

> *D. I thought he was a poet and . . .*
> *. . . could lay the rails level on the sleepers*
> *To carry the powerful train of abstruse thought—*
> *1. What an idea!*
> *2. But certainly poets are sleepers.*

The pun on "sleepers" leads us from the railway with its (phallic) train to a "powerful train of abtruse thought" whose sure foundation is poetry written by dreaming sleepers.

In "A Contact" (1933), MacNeice employs a different metaphor:

> *The trains pass and the trains pass, chains of lighted windows,*
> *A register in an unknown language*
> *For these are the trains in which one never goes.*

Here language and train are compared—recalling the famous analogy of Ferdinand de Saussure, who likens the units of a sentence to the carriages of a train.

In "Dreams in Folklore" (1911; *Collected Papers*, Vol. 12) Freud declared: "Thread, moreover, like all things analogous to it (cord, rope, twine, etc.) is a symbol of semen." But it is by no means obvious that MacNeice used the image of thread in this way. More typical is his use of "wire" in Canto XXVI of *Autumn Sequel* (1953):

> *The telegraph poles*
> *Endlessly filing past against the blue*
> *Remind me that those wires connect with living souls . . . .*

Wire, rather than thread, links people by telecommunication; and the question of linking and separation disturbed MacNeice all his life.

ON A MORE OBVIOUS LEVEL, "thread" for MacNeice was "the thread of life". In "Figure of Eight" (1956), he is "winding up the black thread of his days"; while the preacher (in the 1940 poem of the same name) ". . . summoned home his deeds, drew back/Sixty years' expended thread . . . ."

In an earlier poem, "Cradle Song for Miriam" (1928), we find another variation on thread:

> *Till they gather the strands of us together*
> *And wind us up for ever and ever.*

In "The Strand" (1945), a subversion occurs, linking the strand of life with the strand of the shoreline. MacNeice talks of following in the footsteps of his father paddling:

> *. . . my steps repeat*
> *Someone's who now has left such strands for good.*

My suggestion of "subversion" might seem far-fetched, were there not evidence in other poems that MacNeice used the word "strand" ambiguously. Indeed he exploited "strand" as he exploited the word "train"—for example, in "The Burnt Bridge" (1952):

> *Till they thought they saw the golden strand*
> *of the sea that leads to nowhere.*

It is in Canto V of *Autumn Sequel* that thread and shoreline are most fully intertwined:

> *The wind braids*
> *Long strands of brine together.*

Here, we have moved from the thread of life to the strand of life, and thence to the sea as a source of all life. (Significantly, the child psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott regarded the shoreline as a symbol of the transitional space in which the young child comes to know the "external" world.)

In so far as "strand", "thread", and "wire" are interconnected, there is also a link with communication between people, and thus a double subversion of any fixed meaning for the word "thread".

Finally, the image of a broken thread occurs at least twice in the poems. In "Death of a Cat" (c.1950-51), MacNeice writes of the cat's dark thread of life:

> *It snapped a few yards short of a closed door,*
> *Of home, and he lay on his side like a fish on the pavement.*
> *While the ball of wool rolled back and down the hill. . . .*

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This seems as straightforward a metaphor of death as the breaking of the thread of life. However, in "The Casualty" (1943), about the death of a close friend whom he missed bitterly, MacNeice declared:

> *. . . if ten*
> *Winds were to shout you down or twenty oceans boom*
> *Above the last of you, they will not sever*
>
> *That thread of so articulate silence . . .*
>
> *And making all your past contemporaneous*
> *Under that final chord of the mid-Atlantic swell.*

Irrespective of the homonym "c(h)ord", "The Casualty" contains a double denial that the thread connecting MacNeice to his friend is severed, and that death has severed the thread of his friend's life. The latter is the usual initial reaction of a bereaved person. The phrase "so articulate a silence"—as well as being a paradox—may be also what is called in dream interpretation "secondary revision", in which the dreamer alters the dream unconsciously so that it may "cover its tracks".

Donald Winnicott, commenting on a child who tied the furniture together with string, claims that string can be used by children to deny separation from mother in the same way that telephone wire represents communication. In this context, in other words, the broken thread does not represent castration (as it might in Freudian symbolism), but simply a loss of a loved one. In may be, in fact, that the frequency in the poems of images of thread, wool, wire, cord, etc., points to an impulse to "join up" separate "souls" and at the same time express MacNeice's anxious pangs about a separation in his childhood.[3] Winnicott's summing-up of his thoughts on the child's use of string seems tailor-made for MacNeice's dialectical ways:

> "I have referred to two objects (persons) as being both joined and separated by the string. This is the paradox that I accept and do not attempt to resolve."[4]

In considering Louis MacNeice, therefore, one may recognise the Freudian reduction of lived experience to early repressed sexual longings and dreads, but a knowledge also that MacNeice subverted any rigid use of symbols. In this he echoed what is best in psychoanalysis—the systematic subversion of rigid and fixed interpretations. Patients who enter psychoanalysis are *already* suffering from a rigid interpretation of their lives, given to them by their family members and later by themselves: they certainly do *not* require another rigid interpretation, reducing their experience to Freudian symbols without the relief of Lacanian ambiguity.

[3] Cf. R. Skelton, "The Childhood of Louis MacNeice", *Irish Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. IV, no. 1 (1987), pp. 11-15.
[4] Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (1971).

"Einstein in the Patent Office"

Stanley Middleton at 70—By PHILIP DAVIS

HE REMEMBERS the street where he lived as a child. The local children would arrange to meet at the gas lamps, named after the occupants of the houses next to them. The Leatherlands', the Stevensons': "Come on. See you at Leathoes", we said, "At Stevoes." While the kids ran and shouted in the evening streets, the adults thus named kept indoors, getting on with their own lives at the back of the house. But even after the Leatherlands and Stevensons had left the neighbourhood they might still be remembered, simply for their names' sake, by conservative-minded boys sticking to the forms of their play.

Years later in adulthood one such boy, now a writer, recalls the names in the past's gaslight, shining like lines of provincial poetry:

> *They had their moment, these folk, unearned*
> *Centres of verbal interest. Now they're dead,*
> *I guess. One family I can't put even vague*
> *Figures to. I am somewhat equivalent.*
> *Somewhat. A circle of light, a centre of*
> *Talk. My name is loosely attached.*
> *Fifty years hence somebody will pull me*
> *Out of his head. I am not displeased.*

"My name", this writer, is Stanley Middleton—not often seen in print as a poet but probably England's most prolific novelist, having published 28 novels since 1958 when, belatedly, he first appeared in print at the age of 39. Writing virtually a novel a year since then, he won the Booker Prize in 1974 with *Holiday* and this year is 70 years old.

"Stanley Middleton", another name, though to himself a centre of nerves, memories and words—but just another name that somebody may briefly call to mind years after his death. "I am not displeased", he writes: with its double negative, it is a statement typical of this cagey, elusive writer whose fears are sanitised and whose depths are half hidden. For Middleton seems to make no great claims. He is a man who pretends to be what he also partly fears he anyway is: an ordinary person, a common failure. As he

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writes of one of his protagonists, an architect, in *Apple of the Eye* (1970):

> "He saw his own process as a complicated, grossly inefficient, old-fashioned leaking machine; to get as much as a shake out of it, never mind the turn of the wheel, one needed fearsome power, and to create something that would satisfy him the whole clanking issue needed to function, every rusty cylinder, unlubricated piston."

So often the first half of a Middleton novel seems to be going nowhere with characters of insignificance, to be full only of bits and pieces of a novel. An old man, say, casually remembering in *Blind Understanding* (1982) the sudden inexplicable panic of his newly-wed wife on a holiday in France 40 years ago:

> "She said no more except to claim that the guide had gutturally informed them that a cleft they had crossed casually by a couple of planks was nearly a mile deep."

Middleton lets you read on past details like this, just beneath the level of obvious interest. And yet even so, through his characters, he will eventually let slip his tacit ambitions and his disguised warnings against dismissiveness—for, like the cleft, this stuff is casually narrow in appearance but dangerously deep beneath. "My field of fiction", says an ageing novelist in *The Other Side* (1980), "deals with the family, those knots of disagreement. . . . It's a subject of infinite possibilities, I am convinced, but it lacks the grand gestures. I don't say, you notice, the most important."

DO WE NOTICE? Or is a chance memory all that there will be of Middleton and his works in 50 years' time? In a review of *The Daysman* (1984), Nicholas Shrimpton, a lecturer in English at Oxford, made a general case for thinking that Middleton's memory would not last in any substantial form within the History of Literature:

> "Stanley Middleton is the good plain cook of the contemporary English novel. . . . In him the provincial realism of the 1950s survives uncorrupted but also uninspired. Honest, earnest, painstaking, he keeps his steady gaze on the lives of ordinary people, blocking in their outward circumstances with elaborate thoroughness to make the occasional glimpse of their inner selves more striking. Cooking and ironing; WEA classes and car journeys; trips to the theatre and family holidays in Anglesey. This, I suppose, is the stuff of life for those of us of middle station in Britain, now. . . . There is, of course, another theory—that fiction should be playful, provoking or profound. Those who hold such views should not bother to call at this address. Stanley Middleton heard one of the novel's periodic recalls to journalism 30 years ago and has remained faithful to it ever since . . . . It takes courage, of course, to be ordinary in this way, to address yourself with Wordsworthian solemnity to the meanest flower that blows. The question is 'Why bother?' I suspect that I'm not the only reader for whom the kind of fiction that emerges from this exercise is beginning to sound less like the music than the Muzak of humanity."

Suppose, in the face of such powerful criticism, we try to imagine what Dr Shrimpton's sort of reader might prefer.

"Fiction should be playful, provoking or profound." A homosexual architect is left desolate by his long-established lover walking out on him. Recovering slightly, he goes the rounds of gay bars and clubs, not really seeking a casual affair but hoping for the beginning of another honourable, durable relationship. One night he brings home a young actor. On the next morning, a Sunday, he awoke:

> ". . . still slightly fuddled as he was not usually a heavy drinker, to find his partner of the night gone from the bedroom. Neither was he anywhere about the house. Nothing was missing but on the bathroom mirror a message was scrawled. 'You have now joined us. You have AIDS.'"

What do you think of that, then, for a novel? A modern Dostoievsky. Here is what Stanley Middleton would reply:

> "'What do you think of that, then?' Dexter proud of his narrative skill.
> 'Um.'
> 'It's a bastard in't it?'
> 'If you believe it.'
> 'What do you mean?' Dexter sounded affronted."

In this, Middleton's latest novel, *Vacant Places*,[1] Dexter and his wife are told that AIDS horror-story on holiday by a decent middle-aged couple, the Wests; he is now retelling it to the novel's protagonist, Dexter's superior, an accountant and part-time radio playwright—he might perhaps use it for one of his plays. Spice up the good plain cook. Abashed by Fairfax's scepticism, Dexter goes home and discusses the matter afresh with his wife, reporting back the following day:

> "'She didn't believe it, either. She thinks she'd read it in some magazine.' He grinned, cheerful again. 'And do you know what I said to her? I said, "And there you sat nodding, taking it all in as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth." And she said, "You could tell they were romancers."'
> 'I see.'
> 'But they made the name up and the profession of the man. And they must have agreed to spin the same yarn. Now, why?'
> 'Don't ask me,' Fairfax answered. 'That's more interesting than the original story.'"

What would the Wests, not mad but seemingly normal people, get out of spinning this story? Did they actually conspire together to interest, to cheat? Through what motivation, with what if any secret words between the two of them, to what end? Is this a big deal, a sign of strange unhappiness within a marriage, or a more normal aberration scarcely ever owned up to? This is the clue we need

[1] *Vacant Places*. By STANLEY MIDDLETON. Hutchinson, £11.95.

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as to how to take Middleton, this is where he starts from as though, ahead of us, coming at life the second time round. For he starts not with the grand gestures of the original AIDS drama but with what is apparently more secondary, more realistically ordinary, and is in fact more subtly and chasteningly baffling: the hidden story-behind-the-story of the Wests. Similarly the novelist in Stanley Middleton, sceptical, canny and devious, would be wondering primarily not if Dr Shrimpton was right about the alleged dullness but why, even if he were right, he was made so upset and angry by it.

WHAT STANLEY MIDDLETON has dared to do, then, is tacitly assert as primary, concerns and questions that others would still judge to be secondary. This is how he has almost deliberately left himself open to the charge of being a second-rate novelist. To give an example: his marvellous early novel *A Serious Woman* (1961) charts a young woman's growth in Middleton-like seriousness even through personal failures. Dorothea Seyton has helped her fiancé Malcolm Smith through a nervous breakdown; she now discovers that, recovered, he has found someone else and kept out of her way. When inquiringly she had gone to see his doddery parents, who had so needed her when their son was in the mental hospital, they had kept quiet about this new development. Dorothea goes to see them again, with the *primary* intention of telling them what she thinks of their cowardly collusion in deceiving her:

> "'Why didn't you say anything the last time I was here?'
>
> 'We should,' said Mrs Smith. 'I regret it. Many's the time I've cried myself to sleep.'
>
> 'Don't upset yourself again,' said Smith. He heaved himself up, sat on the arm of his wife's chair and tried to put a hand comfortingly on her. Dorothea watched them. They were awkward; they were ugly. They hadn't got any beliefs or ethos or anything else but small-talk and club-jokes and shop and dish-wash. And yet they sat together, making a mockery of the things they had; a decent hair-do, good clothes, a gold watch-chain. Smith sat on with his hand on his wife's arm. His pudding face was dull; hers twisted. But they were together in public because they were up against it. There was something in that. They looked daft. But when the social round meant nothing, and they knew themselves as mean, cheap parents of a thoughtless boy, Smith was willing to sit by his wife, embarrassment and all, and put a hand of comfort out."

It is against her interest, it remains qualified with severe judgements and qualifications, it is all in all an apparently *secondary* matter; but Dorothea there sees something momentarily inspiring in the half-defiant, mutual fidelity of the Smiths when faced with their self-confessed faithlessness elsewhere.

Of course they had their reasons, their fears for their

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barely recovered son, their embarrassed predicament, and there is innocence in their guilt. Nor can Smith himself now see how marvellously in his very awkwardness he is managing to stick by his wife: if he could see it, the laws of life seem to say, it would no longer be there. So Dorothea, who would naturally have preferred to be the pitied and indignant victim, has to be both the cheered and the consoling witness:

> "Perhaps it was her own state of tension and disappointment, but Dorothea loved them. She got up, crossed, and bending down kissed Mrs Smith on the lips.
>
> 'You mustn't worry yourself,' she said.
>
> There was no virtue in the kiss. Her lips touched dry skin, dead skin almost, and the expensive scent rose overpoweringly.
>
> 'You're a good girl,' said Mrs Smith smilingly. Her face crumpled and she began to howl. Smith fumbled about her until Dorothea pushed him away and took the thin shoulders in her arms. . . . The warm burst of feeling had gone; she was more conscious of cramp than love. But she held on, uncomfortably without pride. . . .
>
> 'I'm going to say something that's silly,' said Mrs Smith, putting down an empty cup. 'It's not meant to be cruel. I oughtn't to say it. But . . . I'm glad it's you, Dorothea, and nobody else. Though I wish it was nobody.'
>
> Dorothea was surprised again."

Middleton isn't a sentimentalist but a puritan: Dorothea has to work on the basis of that "warm burst of feeling" *after* it has gone cold in her. He is also a careful craftsman: "*uncomfortably* without pride", in her very comforting, is another of Middleton's precisely awkward touches that do so much to authenticate the scene, as Dorothea takes over the clumsy position of the husband on the arm of his wife's chair, putting "a hand of comfort out".

"I'm glad it's you, Dorothea." Glad, that is to say, it is you, the good one, who is the one that has been hurt. This seems "silly", "cruel", unjust even to the person who says it. But it has to do with the way in which Middleton uses his brand of realism to leave the world both transformed and yet unchanged: right things are left still in wrong places, the novelist's second opinion values people all the more for their incapacity to put a high value on themselves even while they continue to carry out valuable but customarily unrecognised undertakings.

It is as if there are three stages: first, the undervaluing of the secondary qualities contained within the ordinary run of things; second, Middleton's quietly transcending re-evaluation of that under-estimate; third, his return of that re-evaluation incarnate within the terms and pressures of the ordinary, so as not to disturb the very texture of the achievement by the author's own celebration of it. The third move returns the second back to the first: the lazy, imperceptive reader who expects to do no work sees no difference, no movement at all, and calls Middleton a boring reporter of the humdrum. In another minute Dorothea will find the Smiths pathetic and irritating again. And another day she, like Middleton himself, will find her very seriousness and generosity to be equivocal achievements:

> "She'd been generous, had done well. The serious woman watched points. . . . Experience was cooling her courage . . . . Control was being learnt at the expense of—what And was that good or bad? If she were to be headmistress, good; but she saw herself rather as a Shakespeare or Mozart. That was arrogant, she knew; that was unsupported by evidence, but she hankered for the wits' end rather than the term's end."

YOU LOSE AS YOU GAIN: lose power but gain experience. "Was that good or bad?" Neither, both. You hear a couple making up a dramatic story and wonder what inner drama, greater in one sense yet lesser in another, needs to find expression that way; you see a couple facing the fact that they have let you down, and can't help admiring them for doing so.

Thus *Him They Compelled* (1964) opens with a poet, likewise ambivalent in his mixture of strength and weakness, returning to the street where he was born, reciting names from the past, door by door:

> "In that house Billy Goodliffe, a nobody, had lived and died, with his red face and its criss-cross of broken veins, his grey-black strands of hair. Now, fifteen years later, at seven-thirty on a Friday in September the dead man was suddenly, unexpectedly important here to John Ash Newton, living, thirty-eight, a poet.
>
> Newton, wiping his hand across his mouth, grimaced at his nostalgia. He disliked it, but could not deny its impact or his own readiness to succumb."

Nostalgic, sentimental: "It takes courage, of course, to address yourself with Wordsworthian solemnity to the meanest flower that blows. The question is 'Why bother?'"

And that *is* the question always aching at the bottom of Middleton's heart, for as the ageing protagonist of *Cold Gradations* (1972) puts it, fearfully: "I'll conclude the whole human race is a failure?" Middleton's people have to fight against the dark, in the dark:

> "These shocks, poignancies, about nothing-to-shout-about were his main concern, his chief failure, he felt. He remembered, shortly after he'd been demobilized, walking along the main street and coming across old Sydney Woodward, a man he'd known all his life, who'd lived next door when the Newtons were young. The old chap was ill, shuffled, his mouth turned down like rubber, his overcoat pulled close about him in spite of the late spring sun.
>
> 'Morning, Mr Woodward,' he'd shouted. 'How are you?'
>
> And the man had looked up, thinly, not recognising the posh voice of an officer-and-gentleman, and had said 'Good morning, sir,' and shoved miserably away. Newton felt the jolt of it now. It was not worth making a song-and-dance about. He could have set it right there and then. 'Don't you remember me, Mr Woodward? It's Jack Newton.' There would have been a sparse recognition, a few words exchanged. That might have been worse.

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When Newton attempted explanations he found his listeners baffled. He'd gone up a class; he was different. Some brash contemporaries might try to leap the gap, others to ignore it, others, like Woodward, turn back from it, knowing they were ill-equipped for social athletics. It was the same with hymns. Some tune he'd sung in Sunday School, and he'd be back with those ancient Christians who'd bored him to death. Now, they, like Woodward, again, were dead, and he loved them, thought them mistaken and heroic, considered that the attention he gave them at this minute their heaven, their eternal bliss. And, come to think of it, forty years' faithful service winning five minutes' recognition a quarter of a century or so later; it was worth it. They were big men.

Of course, he understood the puzzlement of his listeners. And to see them stroking their faces and knitting their brows gave him satisfaction. That's what a poet's duty was. To upset, very mildly, the point nought one or two per cent of the population who had or bothered to acquire the most flickering, dim glimmering of what he was on about.

Newton sat in his study, pulling his face awry."

An old working-class man who now calls you "sir". Like Newton, Middleton could have knocked off a bit of dialogue to cover over the difficulty. But the mile-deep cleft would have remained beneath the couple of planks. "His main concern, his chief failure": does the reader see how those two phrases, so closely juxtaposed, fit together in a mind? "You don't see—and how could I expect you to?" says the novelist in *The Other Side:*

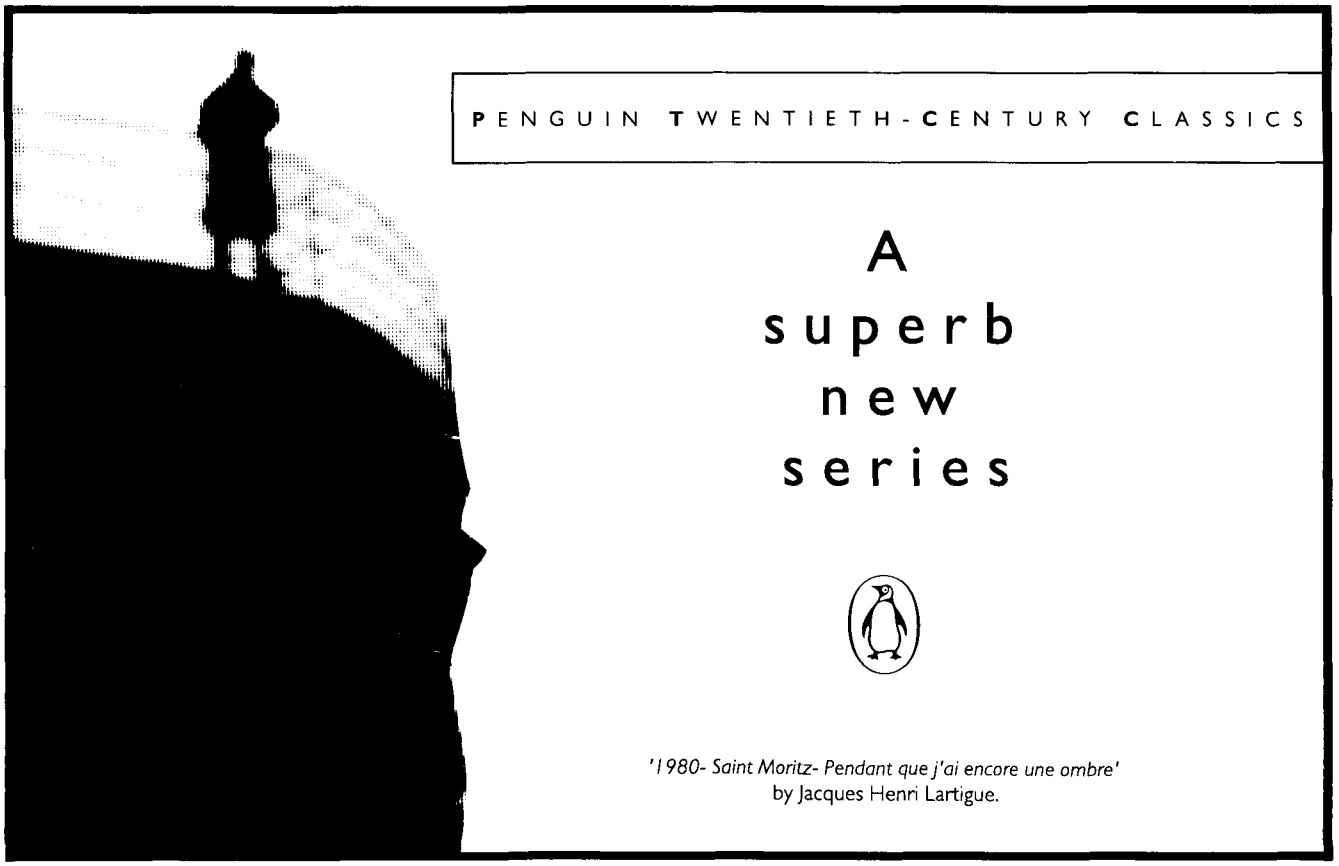
> ". . . how delicately balanced the distinction between success or failure is. The first often depends upon the second. The second provides motive and impetus, but only if other things are right."

The second, "chief failure", fuels the first, "main concern", balancing that terrible question "Why bother?" above the void.

In this tight balance, Middleton has a radically different sense of the proportions of life when he can call five minutes' realisation 25 years later from one out of .01 or .02% of the population "worth it", something big. Even though that one little person, to whom it makes only that short temporary difference, compared with all that more closely concerns him in his own important life, will probably in turn be utterly unknown in the world or quite forgotten in the future.

"WHAT IS 'COMMON' about 'common life'?" asks Saul Bellow. "What if some genius were to do with 'common life' what Einstein did with 'matter'? Finding its energetics, uncovering its radiance." But Stanley Middleton plays Einstein as if Einstein were still an unknown clerk in the Swiss Patent Office.

For consider Middleton's version of relativity. A young newly-married man in *Valley of Decision* (1985) has to



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accept common life on his own when his wife goes off to America to try for a singing career on the opera circuit. A schoolteacher and part-time musician, David Blackwall fills his time as cellist in an ambitious string quartet which, by chance, he is invited to join, temporarily, just when his life seems empty. David puts his heart into that instead—but a complex version of "instead". For he felt:

> ". . . a certain satisfaction in that he was about to parallel Mary's venture in New York. He'd have to abandon serious schoolmastering for a few weeks, as she'd abandoned husband, home, country, but now he fiercely wanted to do it. If he could come up to scratch, so could his wife. Superstitiously he felt he helped her by taking on this burden."

Middleton often thinks in terms of life's separated parallels: husband and wife each have their first concert on the same day, but with the time difference David will be finished before Mary starts. David arrives at 3.00, English time, for a final rehearsal before the performance at 7.30 in the evening:

> "Looking round this stripped place, David wondered how Mary felt at 10.30 in the morning, in the bright American snow. A depression nagged, because he could do nothing for her, she for him."

Art has to do. In the quartet the "violence of individualism" coheres into "supreme combined rationality"; near-mad loneliness emerges surprisingly as part of collective supportive music.

Moreover, in Middleton's own art it is as though the Atlantic time-difference becomes a symbol for the felt space between the husband's thoughts of his wife and his wife herself—from whom he begins to hear very little indeed. By erecting that barrier Middleton also creates for himself a space of powerful silent yearning between his own prose and that which it tries to refer to, tries to affect.

In Middleton's telegraphese, the space between "he for her" and "she for him" ("could do nothing") makes formal grammar itself felt as mental emotion. It is Middleton's equivalent of what he describes in *An After-Dinner's Sleep* (1986) as the art of Haydn: "Here Haydn touched romanticism, cried for the unattainable, but shortly, with a neat brevity encaged in a few bars." "She for him": nothing? Middleton treats of his "nothing-to-shout-about" things with a whispered succinctness that, like poetry, explodes noisily when picked up at a certain inner pitch.

DAVID STOPS HEARING at all from Mary. He has to guess why. While he perches on planks, his wife is falling in love and committing adultery with the producer of the opera. It doesn't work out. She has to come back home. "Home"—David "felt the jolt of it now":

> "'Come back to me, Mary,' he said, off balance.
>
> The imperative passed without effect. He had decided that she was not going to answer, that he must toss his cap again into the fearful ring, when she spoke.
>
> 'Do you mean that?'
>
> He did not know; in his dizzy distress he had no landmarks except for this central pointer; he must take her.
>
> 'Yes, I wouldn't say it otherwise.' That sounded weakly, unconvincing even to him. 'I want you back.'
>
> She said nothing, but her posture hinted of hope. She did not deny him, repel him with stiffness. She was listening.
>
> 'Come home,' he said. He remembered a catchword of his father's from some radio show. His all was subsumed under ham acting, comedians' foolery, half-forgotten ephemerality. The gaiety of nations.
>
> 'I have,' she said.
>
> 'For good?'
>
> 'You don't want me.' Silent crying began again; rolling of tears etched her grief into him.
>
> 'I do.'
>
> 'Why?'
>
> 'Because I love you.'
>
> 'But look what I've done to you.' Her voice was strong, letting him get away with nothing, checking his banalities.
>
> 'I want you here.'
>
> 'David.' She stopped, as if to make sure her argument was clear before she put it. 'You'll never be able to forget what I've done to you. It'll always be there, in your mind, whether you say anything or not. It will fester. I acted abominably. How can you say . . . ?'
>
> 'I've said it.' Strongly, upstanding.
>
> 'That's sentimental . . .'
>
> 'Do you want to come back?'
>
> 'Yes. If you'll . . . I think so.'
>
> Her face, tear-stricken, was turned away from him. Was this wholehearted? He did not know, but crouched, on his right heel like a miner again, by her chair.
>
> 'You won't be able to forget what I've done, will you?'
>
> 'I'm not perfect. No. I expect what you say is right enough, but it hardly seems worth wasting energy on just now.'
>
> 'It's no use starting off forgetting these things.'
>
> 'You'll be telling me next,' he said, flaring, 'that I only took you back because I didn't much care one way or the other about what had happened.'
>
> 'I didn't say that.'
>
> 'I know you didn't. But what you don't realise is how glad I am to see you in this room, telling me you're going to stay.'
>
> As soon as he established it in words it became the truth. A powerful sense of, at present, satisfaction rather than exhilaration gripped him, expressed by his monosyllable 'glad'. He could not define, or defend it. Perhaps, these disclaimers darted, flitted at him sharp, resisted temptations, his pride had been temporarily bandaged, in so far that he had no longer to go about saying 'My wife has left me for another man.' It did not feel like this. He could not quite disturb the universe, even shake the street and his bent legs were beginning to hurt, but his conviction grew, strong, huge, deepening, not overwhelming yet, but near flood level. Dangerous, yes, all that. But right, right. Correct. Just."

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You feel in the silence, like a chasm beneath the struggle for adequate words, both the self-doubt which is inside him and the guilty depression which he faces outside, in her. The words on the page are like Middleton's equivalent of a musical score: the "notes" alone are only signs, so that, as we read, it ought really to re-sound something like this:

> "*Do you mean that?* He did not know. Why bother?
> *Yes. I wouldn't say it otherwise.*
> Sounded unconvincing even to him.
> *For good?* What's the good? Where?
> *You'll never be able to forget what I've done to you.*
> True, true, true. So why bother?
> *How can you say . . . ? I've said it.*
> The Muzak of humanity . . ..
> *A powerful sense of, at present, satisfaction rather than exhilaration . . ..*
> Careful, frail, is it enough to build on? 'At present': nervous for the future: 'it will fester'?"

It is nervily similar in *Cold Gradations* when the old man has struggled to find words to get a depressive out of her bed, and now waits downstairs for the appointed time when she is supposed to try to get up for tea: "Every sentence he used upstairs he now altered, in vocabulary, in tone; he tried other approaches, but inside a quarter of an hour, with his eyes shut, he merely repeated words, feverishly, threshing over not with any hope of improvement, but in a whirl of physical uncontrol." Do you think it's because I don't care that I can ask you back? Do I think it's because of mere pride that I want you back? Inside and out, over and over. These phrases, moreover—"I want you back", "Come home", "Because I love you"—sound like the notes Blackwall plays, near exhaustion, during the last piece in that first concert:

> ". . . as he thought about it later, even Mozart, the essence of the composer, had vanished, in that the player no longer created, merely repeated what he had practised. Perhaps he did that well, but he felt nothing of the joy of cooperation with a musical genius; he was an efficient tape, going over its one track. Payne and his mother told him later how beautifully he had played, and this led him to wonder whether his height of performance could only be reached by a series of creative rehearsals and a lack of energy sufficient to hamper even minor experiments. This seemed unsatisfactory, but one, he, was as one was."

The Muzak of humanity: Middleton the man who can only repeat the one track without experiment, avoiding wits' end?

Not so. That mere word "glad" comes back to him, ringing true, as if he were now also the grateful auditor of all that he thought exhausted through the continuous effort of his own willed moral practice and performance:

> ". . . how glad I am to see you in this room, telling me you're going to stay. . . ."

You don't often yourself get the benefit of what you help to create. But here it is so: the anxious depressive warnings about the future ("It *will always* be there, in your mind", "She stopped, as if to make sure her argument was clear *before* she put it") are met and answered by the creative present: "As soon as he established it in words it *became* the truth."

This is the same man who wrote *A Serious Woman* nearly 25 years earlier, fighting to recover something good, hold on to something worth the bother, "right, right", in the midst of doubts and depressions. "I'm glad it's you, Dorothea." Still shaken, surprised by morality as something still available as genuine feeling, David Blackwall is grateful he has managed a good day: he couldn't say what he was grateful to. The novel ends in the knowledge that David and Mary will have future trouble as a result of this, bad days when the decision seems wrong or unworkable—"Newton sat in his study, pulling his face awry"—but, but it is "for good".

Of Stanley Middleton's 28 novels none does him anything other than credit, while I take at least nine—*Harris's Requiem* (1960), *A Serious Woman, Him They Compelled, The Golden Evening* (1968), *Cold Gradations, Holiday, Blind Understanding, Valley of Decision* and *An After-Dinner's Sleep*—to be major works; works which, best read together, some enterprising publisher should therefore reprint together in two or three fat volumes. The last two in my list are, in my view, Stanley Middleton's masterpieces. As some character in his books will often say gratefully to another who, like Middleton himself, none the less remains doubtful and worried despite the commendation: "You have done me good."

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Ententes Cordiales: The French in London and Other Adventures. By DAVID ARKELL. Carcanet, £12.95.

Charming, scholarly anecdotes introduced by Claire Tomalin and illustrated, in David Gentlemanly vein, by Philip Norman. They cover such exotic visitors as Verlaine and Rimbaud ("A Season in Camden Town"), Céline, and Michel Butor, plus return traffic by Ronald Searle, the Murrys, etc. Good accompaniment to the author's study of Alain-Fournier, another visitor noted here.

Sea-Brothers: The Tradition of American Sea Fiction from Moby-Dick to the Present. By BERT BENDER. University of Pennsylvania Press, $29.95, £26.95.

The author is Associate Professor of English at *Arizona* State U., well inland; but he writes expertly about how Melville set the "man's estate" agenda and the biological context for sea fiction, while brotherhood was later qualified by Darwinian ideas of competition for survival. The last exemplar is the remarkable Peter Matthiessen; but Crane and Hemingway figure too.

The Science of Science. Society and Science. By BERNARD DIXON. Cassell, £7.95 each.

Two in a bright new illustrated series of large-format handbooks intended, presumably, for senior school pupils trained in other disciplines. The first is subtitled "Changing the Way We Think": it charts the development of scientific method and its extension to new fields. The second, "Changing the Way We Live", concentrates on more familiar achievements.

Carrington: A Life of Dora Carrington 1893-1932. By GRETCHEN GERZINA. John Murray, £18.95.

Disliked by Lawrence and Huxley, lover of Mark Gertler, Gerald Brenan, Ralph Partridge, Bernard Penrose, and (tragically) Lytton Strachey, Carrington was less renowned as a painter in her Bloomsbury heyday. This account is fair and sympathetic: but that whole subject is almost wrung dry by now. What remain are many very good pictures, some reproduced here.

Talking Blues: The Police in Their Own Words. By ROGER GRAEF. Collins Harvill, £15.00.

Grittily authentic documentary, lacking only authorial conclusions—but readers can reach their own. Most British police are more traditional "Bobbies" than sometimes painted; but increased violence in society, political unpopularity owing to the miners' strike, and sometimes weak leadership have made too many of them lonely, on edge, and unhappy—especially with a legal system they (understandably) think too kind to villains.

The Challenge of Europe: Can Britain Win? By MICHAEL HESELTINE. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

Splendid, timely, up-to-date and sensible restatement of the case for Britain to engage more positively in helping unite Western Europe. The choice is "whether to cling to the sovereignty we know and value, exercising it, even as it shrinks, with all the resourcefulness we can find; or to strengthen that sovereignty by sharing it with others, acknowledging the hazard in order to grasp the greater opportunity". Churchillian stuff.

Bio-technology: Changing the Way Nature Works. By JOHN HODGSON. Cassell, £7.95.

Further graphic and fascinating exposition in the series noted above.

Passionate Opinions: The Cultural Essays. By JOHN CLELLON HOLMES. University of Arkansas Press, £18.35, paper £10.35.

Third and final volume of the late author's essays, mainly about the Beat Generation of which he was a member, champion, and chronicler. For the most part, his views are much squarer than the hip persona might suggest, with a great deal about the need for seriousness and responsibility, rather than letting it all, in the dreary dated phrase, hang out.

Tales of a Man Called Father. By RONNIE KNOX MAWER. Souvenir Press, £12.95.

Delightful vignettes of a stingingly eccentric *paterfamilias*, who was surely a Gossean domestic tyrant, but whom these affectionate reminiscences finally make rather touching as well as comic: "Why the Almighty God doesn't consult me about things, I can never understand." Shades of Dylan Thomas, too.

The Inner Limits of Mankind: Heretical Reflections on Today's Values, Culture and Politics. By ERVIN LASZLO. One World, £8.95, $14.95.

Personal spin-off from the author's (and his collaborators') 1977 Report to the Club of Rome on *Goals for Mankind*, repeating familiar pleas against megacities, overcropping, overgrazing, overfishing, pollution, clearing forests, and generally imposing a robber economy on our battered planet.

The Modern American Novella. Edited by A. ROBERT LEE. Vision Press, £16.95.

Nine essays, on James, Crane, Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton, Nathanael West, Hemingway, Salinger, Bellow, and "the Southern Novella" (Faulkner, McCullers, *et al.*). A slight tendency to recapitulate plots is offset by some genuine evaluation and comparison. Harold Beaver, on West, is outstanding.

Parson's Mill. By TIMOTHY LEWONTIN. University Press of New England, $15.50, £8.75.

Enthralling account of the author's adventure, from a middle-class background, into apprenticeship in a New England sawmill which might have come from the pages of Thoreau. The need for vigilance at the lethal saw is matched by the delicacy of working alongside old-style artisans: both are caught in spare, fastidious prose.

Info-technology: Changing the Way We Communicate. By JACK MEADOWS. Cassell, £7.95.

Further *haute vulgarisation*, this time on the frontiers of micro-electronics.

Armour against Fate: British Military Intelligence in the First World War. By MICHAEL OCCLESHAW. Columbus Books, £14.95.

Some of Dr Occleshaw's material is familiar from Christopher Andrew's general but analogous work (unmentioned here): but most is the fruit of minute and exhaustive research and interviewing. It includes the opinion that Grand Duchess Tatiana, not her younger sister Anastasia, survived the massacre of the Russian royal family.

Voices of the Revolution. Edited by PETER VANSITTART. Collins, £10.95.

A fascinating idea, expertly carried out: to provide a mainly chronological account of the French Revolution by quoting contemporaries—sometimes only in one telling sentence. Although mainly Paris-based, this is a reliable source-book and a vivid, lively read.

R.M.

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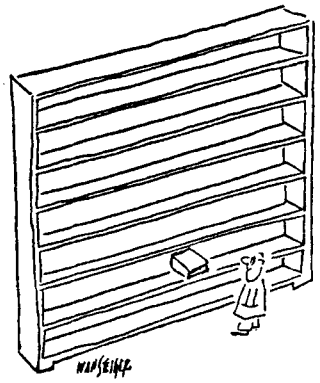
On Total Control & Its Contradictions

The Power of Information—By LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI



THE MANIPULATION of information—with-holding, distorting, and concealing it—is crucially important in controlling human affairs. This has been known throughout human history; and this knowledge has been essential in many professions and trades, including those of spies, blackmailers, politicians, the military, merchants, and business men. All governments, to a larger or smaller extent, have lied—directly or by omission—to their subjects. However, it may fairly be said that it is our century which has witnessed for the first time a new civilisation, in which the entire power system, i.e. control of the population by its rulers, is based on the control of information. He who controls everything people are allowed to know is unquestionably the master. He has no need to fear that his power might be undermined by any organised movement of opposition.

Only during the last decades have we realised that it is the character of the mechanisms whereby information is handed over and distributed in society which fundamentally defines the very functioning of that society. With this in mind, we may say that the Communist totalitarian régime was the first truly modern political system, in so far as it was constructed on a clear realisation of this fact.

The institutional framework which assures ruling bodies control of the flow of information in Communist countries is widely known, and there is no point in dwelling on it. None the less, some aspects of this mechanism deserve attention if we are properly to distinguish totalitarian régimes from various other forms of tyrannical rule that we have known in the past and present.

First of all, Communism has programmed itself—this is attested not only by its actual historical development, but also by its ideological self-definition (above all, in the pronouncements of Lenin and Trotsky)—as a total power that was supposed to encompass all areas of life: production, exchange, information, science, arts, customs, daily human life, beliefs, and feelings. Ultimately, it was intended to attain the unattainable goal: total destruction of civil society, and total replacement of all human bonds by artificial state-imposed mechanisms. It worked on the self-evident axiom: "The more control of information, the more power." The other axiom implicit in its operation—"The more power, the more stability"—was, I would argue, valid only within certain limits. There is sufficient evidence to show that it is dangerous to rely on it unconditionally, although it is only quite recently that some Communist rulers have appeared to admit (if rather reluctantly) that this axiom is perhaps not always valid.

Total power, unlike ordinary tyranny, obviously cannot be satisfied with concentrating all media of information and communication in the hands of the State. More is needed for this purpose than the negative instrument of coercion, which prevents harmful information and opinions from being disseminated. I stress this point in order to counter the widely-held opinion that the institution of censorship is essential in order to sustain the Party's monopoly of information and communication in Communist countries, and that its abolition would bring freedom of speech and print.

Communists did not invent censorship. They invented the modern totalitarian order. In fact, if that system is capable of working properly and in conformance with its principles, censorship is only an auxillary tool; its abolition would bring about only barely perceptible changes. As far as I am aware, there was no bureau of censorship in the East German state. When all media are State-owned (i.e., Party-owned) and the rulers have undisputed power to appoint editors, and to punish them (as well as writers) for any deviation from the established norms and from binding ideological orders, censorship plays a minimal role. To be sure, when the State apparatus is weak and unable to control the population, when the Party itself is torn between factions and cliques—that is to say, when the totalitarian order is enfeebled or breaking down—the institution of censorship really does matter; without it, the monopoly of information would collapse.

IF CENSORSHIP were abolished now in Poland, not only would the well-developed underground press become legally available, not only would the legally printed but independent press (mainly Catholic publications) lose all restraint in criticising the Communist system and the Soviet Union, but the Party-controlled press might become

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dangerously uninhibited. Even in the Soviet Union, where there is for the first time in decades an open clash of opinion, abolition of censorship would probably increase the inner Party struggle to a dangerous level, and independent publications would mushroom. But with abrogation of the censorship office in Rumania or Albania, most probably nothing would change.

Control of information is based not on censorship but on the monopolistic ownership of all material means of communication and, no less importantly, on the *nomenklatura* system which gives the ruling bodies power to select and appoint trusted personnel to all significant posts (indeed all posts) throughout the communications network. In the system of global nationalisation of the means of production and exchange, there is no way in which a non-nationalised communications network could flourish; if some pockets of independent information can emerge or even, as in Poland, be semi-tolerated, this is a political concession extorted by social pressure and granted, however grudgingly, by the Party as a matter of an *ad hoc* political cost-and-benefit calculation.

Total power cannot be achieved by negative devices alone: censorship, destruction of all movements of opposition (actual or potential), jailing or killing the disobedient, preventing the population from voicing its grievances. Those who aim at total power have to use coercion and fear in order to make everybody an active accomplice. People are supposed to be afraid not merely of expressing wrong ideas, but of not expressing the "correct" ones: voting in pseudo-elections; participating in marches to display their enthusiasm for the régime; and producing all sorts of signs that add to its glory.

It is quite possible that this "positively-oriented" coercion can even produce, eventually, a kind of half-hearted acceptance or half-acceptance of Party-imposed ideological rules. People normally feel wretched when they realise clearly and painfully that, as a result of fear, they not only forbear from opposing their oppressors—though unpleasant, this is psychologically tolerable—but actively applaud, glorify, and heap praise on them. In the first case, there is only fear—a universally known human emotion; in the second case, there is self-denial, and thus a psychological semi-suicide. Therefore, this kind of positive behaviour, unlike abstention, easily tends to be at least partially internalised, thus producing an ideologically split personality which was a typical product of mental Sovietisation.

People who have behaved under compulsion as if they loved their oppressive political environment, have ended by half-loving it. This was, as we know, the main goal of the Stalinist régime. *Dukhovna perekovka*, as it used to be called—the reforging of the human soul in order to produce "the New Man of Socialism": a mentally empty, passive, ignorant mannequin, without will, unable to resist, to revolt, to think critically, and easily swallowing anything the rulers wish him to believe at any given moment. Pessimistic observers even voice the opinion that this goal has actually been reached, and that *Homo sovieticus* is a reality of Soviet society not only on a mass scale but irreversibly. I do not share this gloomy assessment which has been clearly belied by recent events in Communist countries, but nobody will deny that impressive successes have been scored in the movement toward this ideal.

The main point of Stalinist education was that all communications between people and all forms of community should be filtered through the State machinery —individuals were supposed to be completely isolated in face of the quasi-omnipotent State, without support, without help, without encouragement from other individuals unless that support was State-organised. The all-pervading secretiveness and the embargos imposed on an enormous amount of quite trivial and innocent information were chiefly at the service of this goal: to make people helpless, frightened, isolated and, eventually, liable to admit that voluntary and internalised identification with the system was the only means of gaining a minimum of not merely physical but mental safety.

Only a very small portion of the knowledge which was concealed from people had anything to do with State security. For instance, under Stalin (and for many years after) no maps of Soviet cities were available. The point was not to prevent hostile or potentially hostile powers from knowing the topography of Moscow—who could doubt that US and NATO Intelligence files were replete with maps? —but to make it difficult or even impossible for individuals unfamiliar with Moscow to move around with official assistance. If you did not know the city, you could ask in a booth, specially provided for the purpose, where a given street was and how to get there, thus informing some state body, however minor or unimportant, about your intended trip. The same applied to Moscow's non-existent telephone directories. If you had a name and address, you could call directory inquiries and get the phone number; but then your intended telephone-call became, so to speak, official property.

In fact, under the Stalinist system there is practically no information at all in the normal sense. The little knowledge that people are officially allowed to receive about the world and their own country was invariably given in the context of the correct assessment of a given event; so that information, in reality, amounted to proper rules of behaviour. Newspaper readers were often not even supposed to know the real character of an event; the point was to obey orders. Soviet citizens attended mass meetings at which Boris Pasternak was brutually insulted for having written *Doctor Zhivago* (a novel they had never read), or condemned scientific theories which they were unable to understand.

THE SUPREME GOAL of information control by a régime which aspires to total power is not to make people ignorant, as a value desirable *per se*, but to make them helpless and unable to resist—to deprive them of any identity other than that dictated and defined by the agencies of State power. Systematic falsification of history serves the same goal: the destruction of human identity. People should have known that the past was the exclusive property of their rulers, and could be changed overnight. The task of history

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was not to teach people about their past, but to glorify present policy and mobilise for future achievements.

Historical discussions in the relatively relaxed atmosphere after Stalin's death were often no more than barely veiled occasions for expressing political attitudes. For instance, to stress the monstrosities of the reign of Ivan the Terrible (who previously had been highly praised on Stalin's orders[1]) amounted to supporting the Khrushchevian "Thaw", whereas Stalinists extolled Ivan as a progressive, wise statesman. Altering the past was not supposed to serve truth but to promulgate correct politics. The famous Khrushchev speech of February 1956 was a political act of great importance, to be sure, but it was merely a political act; the new information which it included was cut to the shape of current political requirements. (It is worth noticing that this document of capital significance was not, until very recently, made available to the Soviet public.) The examples of historical mendacity are countless; there is no need to cite them. Local, regional, and national traditions were suppressed, or barely tolerated, unless they fitted the official pattern ("the revolutionary tradition"), since it was important to limit and eventually to erase the field of collective memory which provided people with a framework of communal identity other than that offered by Party history.

THIS IS TRUE—though not without ambiguities—about the history of Russia. The Soviet State has often been depicted as a straight continuation of the Russian Empire, and there is no shortage of reasonable arguments (which I leave aside) to support this image. It would not be true, however, to say that Soviet civilisation promoted Russian culture as specifically Russian. It could not, of course, simply suppress it, since it had to assimilate, though selectively, Russian literature and art while providing them with the correct ideological interpretation. Selection was aimed, above all, at obliterating religious traditions and early 20th-century Modernist literature and art. Linguistic Russification was thoroughly carried out, especially in non-Russian Slavic territories, and so a measure of cultural continuity was necessarily preserved. But cultural creativity in the Russian tongue was supposed to be Soviet, and not specifically Russian. Russia as a separate, historically-shaped cultural entity, a focus of independent human loyalty and emotion, was to disappear; the permissible patriotism was to be Soviet, not Russian.

This general tendency could not, of course, be upheld with perfect consistency. It was occasionally broken, as during World War II when Stalin decided to harness Russian patriotic feelings to the War effort, and later, in Brezhnev's time (and now), when various expressions of Russian nationalism (but not of other nationalisms) were tolerated or even encouraged. Those concessions resulted from the decline of official ideology and its inability to perform the desirable political tasks, in particular from the need to use national hatred as a mobilising force.

[1] See in ENCOUNTER, February 1989, Sergei Eisenstein and Nikolai Cherkasov, "A Conversation in the Kremlin: Stalin on 'Ivan the Terrible'", and Vladimir Kobrin, "Stalin as an Historian".

THUS, DISTRIBUTION and manipulation of information invariably served the same goal: the dissolution of all non-State-imposed human communities in order endlessly to increase power. This was the highest—self-centred and self-propelling—value. One can see this in the educational system, of which an important characteristic was its early starting and progressing professional specialisation. The old Westernising Russian Intelligentsia wanted to have its say in all social, cultural, and political matters; it was interested in other civilisations, aspired to a broad world view, refused to narrow down its scope of interests to professional issues or its ambitions to professional skills. It had to be annihilated; and it was, in fact, to a large extent either physically exterminated or, at the beginning of Soviet rule, compelled to emigrate. It was replaced by "the new Socialist Intelligentsia". Guidelines for the production of this new educated class were simple: their education was to be as far as possible limited to professional tasks, and their minds trained in servility. As for scholarly activity, it came under the rule which may be roughly phrased thus: natural sciences are at the service of industrial and military development, human and social sciences at the service of political propaganda and indoctrination. *Homo sovieticus* was not to be given, and was not expected to desire, knowledge as a good in itself.

Even the most laudable achievement of the Communists (for which nobody may blame them)—the eradication of illiteracy in backward countries where they happened to come to power—was subordinated to the same goal of reducing "human material" to a will-less organ of the State. Illiterate peasants, barely touched by the advance of modernity, are naturally impervious to the kind of indoctrination which Communism employs in order to remake society. Their spiritual world was moulded by religious tradition, custom, and orally transmitted knowledge, which was sufficient to survive in a stagnant environment, but they stubbornly resisted any purely ideological pressure whose content was unrelated to their experience and aggressively attacked the essential side of their mentality—a dogged attachment to their piece of land, however small.

OF COURSE, speedy industrial development, both in the market economy and in Communist psuedo-planning, results in great demographic change and in rapid mobility. It uproots peasants, destroys the traditional village, and requires a literate population. Capitalist modernisation throws the rural folk of pre-industrial territories into the vortex of market forces and exposes them to all sorts of economic, political, and ideological pressures, whereas Communist modernisation is a part of the struggle for the supreme goal of total power. If modernisation serves this goal, it is promoted; where backwardness serves the same goal better, backwardness is maintained. The elementary education of the peasantry is promoted in so far as it makes easier the creation of a local power apparatus and indoctrination by the printed word. But the deterioration or even ruin of agriculture is not only accep-

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ted but deliberately caused as an element of policy which aims at the destruction of all segments of population that are economically independent of the State and have not been converted into State property.

The ideal of total power and absolute control of information has, of course, never been achieved in the Soviet Union, let alone in its European protectorates, even in the worst years of Stalinism. Curiosity is, after all, a human characteristic *par excellence*; it is one of the mainsprings of the development of our species, and probably not even the most efficient totalitarianism could ever entirely stifle this blessed vice. But where free information does not exist, it is replaced by public rumour and items of gossip which circulate in infinite numbers with astonishing speed; and foreign sources, when available, are listened to avidly.

Isolation from the world was imposed fairly efficiently in Stalin's time, but the War inevitably brought about breaches in the information screen. Later, when the Soviet Union had to extend all sorts of economic and scientific contacts with the West, the holes in this screen naturally grew bigger. Those contacts have been continuously under strict control. The thousands of Soviet citizens who travel to the West on official business belong to the privileged class and have their own vested interest in indefinite continuation of the régime. But they too contribute unwillingly to its corrosion by making other peoples well aware of the glaring contrast between the two sides of the (much looser by now) "Iron Curtain".

The old Intelligentsia suffered enormous casualties, but it was not thoroughly exterminated; some priceless pockets of independent culture, as well as certain areas of decent scholarship, have been salvaged from the devastating deluge of Stalinism, to reassert themselves somewhat more auspiciously in subsequent years. Some forms of human relationships are strongly resilient and resist nationalisation. In brief, total destruction of civil society was not achieved, despite immense pressure and innumerable cultural calamities.

That the strictest possible, preferably complete, control of information is the essential condition of a régime whose chief ambition is total power is not only obvious but tautologically true. That this control contributes to the strength of the régime both in internal and in foreign affairs, *seems to be* a commonsense truth. And it is true, to a large extent—but not unqualifiedly so, for it happens time and again, and now more strikingly than ever, that the yearning for total power requires measures which bring about unintended counterproductive effects. The ruling class faces more and more choices in which total control, and therefore total power, is bought at the price of decreased stability and various dangers.

A CLOSED SYSTEM in which information is measured out according to one's place in the hierarchy of power is bound to prevent the rulers themselves from being properly informed, thus frustrating their efforts to acquire an undistorted image of events and resulting in wrong decisions. The simple reason for such distortions is that in this system those who supply information are normally the people who are responsible for a given field of work, and every time they bring bad news they accuse themselves. The principle of "Shoot the messenger!" is quite justified in a mechanism where the messenger, more often than not, is indeed the culprit.

In recent years, even the Soviet press has frequently denounced what had been known all along—the systematic falsification of production statistics by local Party and administrative organs. It is likely—since the practice has been widespread all over the country—that as a result Soviet leaders have never had genuine global statistics at their disposal. This self-disinformation is built into the power system, corroding it from within.

THIS IS ONE—but only one—example of the way in which economic efficiency is systematically hampered by closed information. The main reason is probably that calculation of prices is intrinsically unfeasible in this system. Total power implies, above all, complete control of production and exchange, expropriation of the entire population from the means of production, and strict prohibition of private exchange—that is to say, abolition of the market. Since the market is the only reliable source of information about prices, its abrogation means that prices must be arbitrarily set by various bodies in the planning machinery. This means, briefly, that nobody knows the real cost of anything—which inevitably results in a shortage of almost everything, not only consumer goods but production goods as well (except in the highly privileged and much less bureaucratised military industry). Chronic shortages are not a temporary ailment of the Communist anti-market economy but its essential characteristic. There are no economic reasons why production should respond to demand; managers are responsible for fulfilling quotas arbitrarily established by their ministries, and not for satisfying the consumers.

Although the real prices may be concealed from everybody—including the planners (except when they use for their own purposes the price relations in capitalistic markets)—they cannot simply be ordered to vanish. The irreality of Soviet economic policy is naturally corrected by the huge black economy, as well as by mass corruption and bribery. We have recently been getting from official Soviet sources some glimpses of the enormous, though still incalculable, size of this phenomenon, including the powerful mafias and quasi-feudal fiefdoms built on a baronial scale by local Party and administrative leaders. Corruption and bribery cannot be qualified in this system as a social or economic pathology, but they are an indispensable condition of its very survival. All-encompassing planning being simply impossible, a Communist economy is bound to feed itself by a sub-system which is apparently its enemy and which the State is trying to destroy. As a result, we have been witnessing for many years attempts to heal economic life by police repressions. Such measures are obviously hopeless: when mass corruption is caused by fundamental characteristics of the eco-

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nomy, no amount of jailing and hanging of individuals can do away with it.

It might be argued that all these counter-effects of the information barriers are to be seen simply as unavoidable costs of totalitarian power, and that they are tolerable so long as they do not significantly weaken it—those who see total power as the highest good must be ready to pay any price. The poverty of the general population in itself will not—and never did—bring about political revolution. For an oppressive régime, poverty may have advantages. Firstly, people who spend their life in queues in order to acquire necessities have little time or energy to think about political freedom and similar luxuries. Secondly, in such régimes one can buy human loyalty very cheaply, and resources are always at hand of people who are ready to be blindly obedient in return for minimal privileges. As to mass corruption, it is acceptable if the alternative is complete reconstruction of the economic system, which would be politically most risky even if the means of production remain the property of the State. That the rulers fall victim to their own disinformation mechanism is inconvenient but, again, acceptable if a network of independent free information is to be the alternative.

Those counter-arguments, though sound, make up only half of the truth, the other half being that the price to be paid for total power in terms of the negative effects of information barriers might reach a level which threatened that power. It appears that such a level has been reached in the Soviet régime. What is more important, the rulers have become aware of this, and are feverishly looking for some means of changing the information system, and doing so in such a way as not to weaken their instruments of control. In other words, they want to change in order not to change; they want to get rid of undesirable effects without removing their causes.

WHY THIS CRITICAL POINT has been reached just now, we do not know. Why those self-corroding effects of information restrictions have been at work for decades is obvious. It is true that general poverty may have desirable political aspects and that it cannot by itself, that is to say, as a single isolated factor, trigger off political revolutions or important social upheavals. But the history of Communist States provides enough evidence for a truth which has been amply documented in previous epochs: when social crises occur as a result of the unpredictable coincidence of events, poverty and all kinds of material grievances become a powerful fuel of social disturbances. It is reckless to believe that a Communist State can indefinitely, consistently, and with impunity break its promises of abundance, and still be assured of the loyalty of its subjects.

Mass corruption can be tolerated as an unpleasant price if the political system so requires; but mass corruption recreates, though in distorted form, that same civil society whose suppression was the main goal of the system. Corruption gives rise to a large network of social ties and group interests that are independent of official control and feed on the fabric of the quasi-omnipotent state. Behind the façade, an empty shell without substance, which was supposed to remain the only real thing, it rebuilds the real society and real economic relationships.

The information barriers in the economy make the system chronically incapable of innovation and inventiveness. The character of the production process is such that important technological improvements more often than not run counter to the interests of both managers and the working staff, and nobody can expect rewards from them. If the progress of civilisation is to be measured (as Marx would have it) by technological development, "real Socialism" is a fundamentally reactionary phenomenon. Its social texture is naturally resistant to technological change. Such changes do occur, of course, but they must be imposed from above by the State. State organs are the only legitimate source of any initiative, since any expression of spontaneity clashes with the mainspring of Communism—which is all-embracing planning. The spontaneous creativity which, through its variety, contributes to technical and economic growth in free-information societies is stifled and has to be supplanted by the huge apparatus for stealing Western technology.

IT WOULD BE WRONG to argue that technological stagnation is acceptable as a price for keeping total power, within conceivable limits, intact. This is possible in a small, closed society like Albania, which could survive for decades in nearly total isolation and stagnant barbarism, and may perhaps survive for some time yet. Yet even there we may one day see "revisionist" changes. This is not possible in the case of a great empire like the Soviet Union, with expansionist ambitions built into its very ideological principle of legitimacy. Such an empire can no longer afford to isolate itself if it is to retain its world position. It has to be capable of catching up with the technological transformations of Western civilisation, and this is precisely what it is decreasingly capable of because of the accelerated pace of change over the last two decades. Those changes, most inconveniently for the stability of the Soviet system, have the global and well-deserved name of "the Information Revolution". The development of science, too, is naturally crippled in a country where all scientific exchange is still under strict police and political control, and where nobody can use, without special permission, one of the few copying machines in existence.

The particularly dangerous side, as I have suggested, of total information control consists in that it certainly contributes to the régime's stability as long as the rulers need people who are merely passively obedient; but becomes helpless when for whatever reason the point is to induce them to be personally motivated for the defence of the régime, to increase its economic strength, or indeed to do anything at all for "the general cause". If there are disturbances, riots, or strikes in one place, it is most convenient for the authorities to be able to apply a total blockade of news, preventing those in other areas from knowing about

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the events and perhaps being encouraged to imitate them.

Imagine what would have happened if *(per impossibile)* the recent riots in Armenia had occurred in Stalin's time. A few Army divisions would immediately have been dispatched to the spot. There would have been a massacre with many hundreds slaughtered, and the world would have learned about it only months later, from uncertain sources and unreliable rumours, long after the whole incident had lost any possible relevance to the current situation. The Soviet Union was, and to a large extent still is, able to use such controls effectively, thanks to its sheer size. But this cannot be done in Poland with any remotely similar efficacity; if there are troubles, say, in Gdansk, you can block communications with the area for a day or two; but on the next day, inevitably, the entire country is well aware of what has happened.

If, however, apart from technical problems, all-encompassing State ownership of information and universal mendacity serve to stabilise a totalitarian régime, they become suddenly ineffective when it is imperative that people act of their own will for the purpose which the rulers have designed. In the moment of crisis, when a huge mobilisation of "human resources" is needed and coercion is insufficient, the whole construction may be in mortal danger. Long-lasting indoctrination, cultural isolation, and training in fear have proved successful, to some extent, in producing a "new man of Socialism" who passively accepts his identification with the System, but this mental identification is shallow and can rapidly break down under the impact of political shocks.

Apart from the existence of a privileged class of Party, administrative, police, and military functionaries, the stability of the régime is no doubt supported by the sheer fact of the imperial glory which may give people some measure of compensation for the hardships of life. This, however, is a double-edged weapon. We may surmise that it is effective among ethnic Russians but much less so among the non-Russian population of the USSR, and it is obviously counter-productive in the captive nations of Central Europe. Promoting Great Russian nationalism as a mobilising force is very risky, since it automatically increases the non-Russian nationalisms—a most formidable disintegrative force which, if not strictly controlled, threatens the empire with destructive explosions. The rulers know that.

WE CAN NOW OBSERVE many distinct signs that the Soviet leaders realise not only the dangers of freedom of information—they have always been aware of this—but the dangers of information barriers as well. It is clear, however, that the celebrated *glasnost* does not in the least, as far as the leaders' intentions are concerned, mean increased freedom of information, let alone freedom *tout court.* It means an increase in the amount of information that Soviet people are allowed to get from official sources, and permission—within limits—to voice conflicting views. We can certainly read in the press things which seem astonishing by Soviet standards. But the Party is by no means ready to give up total control of the communications systems or to tolerate, let alone encourage, independent sources and an unrestricted flow of information. *Glasnost* does not threaten "Socialist Democracy".

It appears that Gorbachov's goal in enlarging the scope of permissible news and permissible opinions is to win to his side the Soviet Intelligentsia, and he may well succeed on the assumption that there is in this group a feeling of common interests and some solidarity. The release of some previously forbidden books and films (many of them rather innocent by now, like *Doctor Zhivago,* but some, like Orwell's *1984,* or Zamyatin's *We,* potentially explosive), is no doubt an exciting and welcome event in the eyes of the Soviet educated class. In more serious matters, however, the old routine prevails. Let us remember how the Soviet information system reacted to disasters of such magnitude as the Chernobyl nuclear accident or the catastrophic fire in the Leningrad Library of the Academy of Science. According to the independent journal *Glasnost,* the systematic destruction of archives from Stalin's time goes on uninterruptedly.

Moreover, the visible changes in the way the information mechanism operates have no basis in the legal order. They can be abolished overnight by a decree of the Politburo or as a result of a new factional turn in the power struggle among the leaders. We do not know yet whether they announce a long-lasting trend or are no more than a temporary respite which will soon end in bitter disappointment, not unlike Nikita Khrushchev's "Thaw".

THIS DOES NOT MEAN that they are insignificant. Each phase of relaxation, even if it is terminated after a while, leaves traces which make a simple return to the previous order unfeasible. The so-called Dissident Movement of the late 1960s and early '70s seemed to have been destroyed by repression and forcible emigration, but in fact it indelibly changed the mentality of the Soviet educated class. If the Party ceases to give orders to artists about what, and how, they ought to paint, the Soviet system will not fall apart as a result, nor will it collapse because jazz and pop and rock concerts are no longer forbidden; but dozens of such seemingly innocent changes testify to the weakening ability of the régime to keep cultural life under its control, and nobody knows when the cumulative effects may grow into a serious threat to the stability of the whole.

We have recently learned from the press that a few dozen persons in Moscow have decided to set up an opposition party. Of course, there will be no independent party in the foreseeable future, and such initiatives can easily be destroyed by the police. But, again, they leave their traces. A handful of individuals decided to utter the unheard-of idea that no God-given or nature-given order provides a single Party with the right to rule the country despotically; this small fact in itself is a further step in challenging the legitimacy of the régime, and thereby contributing to the slow dismantlement of totalitarian institutions.

The Soviet leaders are entangled in a snare of their

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own making, and their search for new solutions displays the incurable crisis of the system. Soviet peoples have survived for decades in an atmosphere of all-pervading mendacity, accustomed to the idea that the amount and character of the information they receive is defined by the rulers' needs and wishes. Life in such a world naturally produces individuals who are utterly passive, and expect orders before doing anything. This corresponds to the character of Soviet industrialisation in Stalin's time, based on slave or semi-slave labour. Enormously wasteful, it was nevertheless successful so long as it was extensive, technically primitive, and labour-consuming. However, the low productivity of slave labour becomes a very serious obstacle above a certain technical level. The conditions of slavery were significantly reduced in the post-Stalinist period, and a measure of choice has been left to individuals. But this is a very far cry from labour conditions based on contract, law, and freedom of association.

The Soviet leadership would now like to see their subjects active and well-motivated to work—but only on two conditions: that their motivations conform to the goals set by the State; and that the Party and the State apparatus retain full control of all social processes. Briefly, the leaders' dream is of a square circle. We have reason, therefore, to be sceptical about the outcome of Mikhail Gorbachov's economic reforms—however much we recognise that success of the reformist trend would be in the interests of both of the Soviet peoples and of Western civilisation. If the huge machinery of *Gosplan* is kept intact, if the allocation of material resources is still to be centrally commanded, if individual economic units are not free to regulate the labour force and to set their productive goals, if prices are dictated by planning agencies, if the *Nomenklatura* system remains untouched (no matter what changes of personnel might be made), there is reason to expect that the reforms will end as cosmetic adjustments. In this situation, 25% reform does not yield 25% improvement; more likely it will mean no effect at all. Even in the Soviet Union one can hear voices arguing that the economic reforms are an "all-or-nothing" matter. Since "all" is, in present conditions, unthinkable (it would mean the abolition of *Gosplan* and ultimately of the *Nomenklatura* régime, and thus would amount to the ruin of the Communist system), "nothing" or near-nothing seems more likely.

But a far-reaching scepticism about the upshot of the present economic "restructuring" does not justify the expectation of "nothing" in all respects. However limited and cautious, *Glasnost* and the search for new economic solutions have dispersed the atmosphere of immobility and sluggishness. They have put into play various forces which go beyond the intentions of the rulers, and which may stimulate independent sources of social energy.

This is a standard way in which tyrannies crumble. Timid reforms, made under duress and with the intention of reinforcing the existing régime, provoke chain-reactions beyond control. We have seen on a modest scale, over the last year, the possible beginning of this reaction—not least in the form of increasing national awareness and of various cultural initiatives. No matter how slow and how exposed to repressions it is, a movement which aims at the rebirth of civil society in the Soviet régime has now appeared. As to when and how it may reach the point of no return, and ultimately destroy the machinery of totalitarianism, we had better ask well-informed astrologers.

Communism is in deep crisis. Even if the present ruling faction is overthrown, their successors will face the same dilemmas. We may expect that in the near future they will, rather, seek small improvements and half-measures in the hope of patching up the terminal sickness of the structure. But there are signs that they have become aware of this, and of the inherent weakness of the organism which they are tending. This awareness, together with uncertainty about the best way to take, announces the end of this particular political formation, however painful and long its demise might prove to be.

May 1988

Ursa Major

We live with the silence of
imagined bears: there is
stillness like a tarpaulin of snow
laid on fur, and the tang
of isolation, sharp as juniper;
there are old sweetnesses
remembered through the wind, dark
huckleberries cracking on the tongue
and feral honey; and there are
stillbirths and sprung traps yet,
lost scents, and the unexpected
echo in the stars of what we thought
were random discontents
and flawed delight.

John Cameron Burnside

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THEATRE

Romans & Countrymen

By Malcolm Rutherford

CORIOLANUS is the English public schoolboys' play. The resemblances between Coriolanus the man and some of the products of the English public schools are remarkable. Coriolanus himself is pretty clearly the son of a one-parent family, though from early widowhood rather than being born out of wedlock. His desire to please his mother is one of his dominant characteristics, but not the only one. He has done pretty well at school, was almost certainly head boy, yet regards the place as a bit too small for him. There are no real rivals with whom to compete.

Rome, however, is not the only school. There is another some distance away where the head boy is called Tullus Aufidius, and he seems to be built in Coriolanus's own mould. His school is perhaps not quite as good, a little lacking in tradition, but quite capable (say) of winning the rugby "sevens". Aufidius is too big for his school as well. He has heard of Coriolanus, and wants to take him on. The pair of them even dream of each other. There is, quite naturally, an implicit homosexual relationship between them: sometimes it seems a bit more than that.

Coriolanus is not just Captain of Games. He has an innately good, as well as a trained, mind—which is also surprisingly open. When he goes to foreign parts, as a tourist rather than a warrior, he admits that they are much better than prejudice would have suggested: "A goodly city is this Antium", he says when he arrives in Aufidius territory. He is less at home with people outside his own class.

Coriolanus also speaks well. Even if some of his arguments about the role of the state and the common people are defective, and certainly do not enhance his own interests, they are not the expressions of someone entirely uneducated or unobservant. The judgments may be faulty, but the language and the syntax are choice. He has a particular—almost unique—technique of coining verbs from nouns. "Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs are *servanted* to others." "This last old man . . ./Lov'd me above the measure of a father,/Nay, *godded* me indeed." And the best known of all: "Wouldst thou have laughed had I come *coffin'd* home,/That weeps to see me triumph?" he says to his wife when he returns from one of his military (or is it sporting?) victories.

Like most rugby players, Coriolanus likes a drink after the match. He spends rather a lot of his time calling for wine. Sex is a pretty strong instinct as well: not only the schoolboy yearnings for Aufidiuis, but also straight sex. True, it is fidelity rather than promiscuity, but no one should doubt his deep attachment to his wife.

Virgilia (that is, Mrs Coriolanus) does not have a great deal to say in public; she does seem to have some power over her husband and master. It is to his wife, not his mother, to whom Coriolanus first turns when his family comes to plead with him not to make war on Rome:

> *O, a kiss,*
> *Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!*
> *Now by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss*
> *I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip*
> *Hath virgin'd it e'er since.*

In the Young Vic production that has prompted this article, Coriolanus gives her a prolonged and close embrace throughout those remarks. It is totally appropriate to the text. Only then does he switch to his mother, conveying—as only someone capable of all the nuances of manners can—that he has quite deliberately put Virgilia first, without wishing to offend Mama.

Probably Aufidius has much the same instincts, though without the Roman straitjacket, We learn rather less about him. The interesting point, however, is that if Shakespeare had stuck closely to his primary source—"The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus" from Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*—we should have learned even less. Aufidius is not a central figure there; certainly not one wrapped in close personal, physical, and psychological rivalry with Coriolanus. Neither is Volumnia, Coriolanus's mother. The "gracious silence" of Virgilia is not much marked either. All the psychological stresses—the essential Englishness of the play—seem to have come from Shakespeare: there are few other known sources.

THERE ARE, of course, other ways of looking at the work. *Coriolanus* is a play about more than Coriolanus the man. Hierarchy, state power, the difficulty of finding someone to mediate between the top and the bottom of society, the fickleness of the masses as well as their masters, possibly even the abuses of capitalism (as the Young Vic programme note suggested) all come into it. Most of these subjects would have been even more striking at the time of the first performance than now. There were, after all, shortages of corn and widespread disaffections in Jacobean England, just as there were in the Rome that Shakespeare was ostensibly writing about. There have been, on and off, all over the place ever since. "No wonder", as the programme note states, "Brecht loved *Coriolanus*".

All that stands. *Coriolanus* is a very political play, quite as political as *Julius Caesar*. But the fact is that *Julius Caesar* is a Roman play; *Coriolanus* is an English play. Both may have been about the England of the time in which they were

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written, yet where *Coriolanus* differs from *Julius Caesar* is that it is peculiarly predictive. It is about a man rather than a situation; it is a psychological more than a political drama. That is why I think that its fascination remains, especially for a certain kind of Englishman.

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL said in *Coriolanus* about slaughter, the brutality of war, "mothers that lack sons", and so on. But that is not quite how it appears in reality; there are none of the casualty and few of the pathos scenes that come in the history plays. Coriolanus is said to have been wounded all over his body, several times over. Yet when he comes back from the front and is awarded his title for taking Corioli single-handed, he says: "I will go wash;/And when my face is fair, you shall perceive./Whether I blush or no." It sounds more as if he has been playing rugby on an unusually muddy field, or at most engaged in a boxing match, rather than fighting with weapons to kill. There is also that other phrase about "thwacking our general". "Thwacking" is more reminiscent of school than real war. Moreover, there is another deviation from the source. In Plutarch, Coriolanus (as Caius Martius is to become) does not enter the heart of Corioli alone, but "with very few men to help him". The Tarzan or Superman stuff has been invented by Shakespeare.

Sex abounds, even if much of it is repressed. The most blatant example is Aufidius greeting Coriolanus on the latter's defection from Rome:

> *Let me twine mine arms about that body, where against*
> *My grained ash an hundred times hath broke. . . .*
> *Know thou first,*
> *I lov'd the maid I married; never man*
> *Sigh'd truer breath, but that I see thee here,*
> *Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart*
> *Than when I first my wedded mistress saw*
> *Bestride my threshold.*

The word "thing" is instructive in itself.

There are other illustrations. Coriolanus's mother talks about sex, at least indirectly, a lot of the time. The ethic is that both sex and war have a lot to be said for them, but that when the chips are down war is superior. So is the male. What sex and war have in common is that both involve the use of weapons. Where Virgilia stands out is that she dislikes war because it might harm her husband. Where *Coriolanus* differs from much of the rest of Shakespeare's plays is that the sex is not explicit. There are longings left unfulfilled. That again is part of the peculiar, predictive Englishness of Coriolanus, man and play together.

I DID NOT MUCH LIKE the Young Vic production: strange costumes, strange set, for no obvious reasons, and insufficient regard for the verse, some of which is among the best of late Shakespeare, though the ultimate confrontation between Coriolanus and Aufidius was dramatic enough.

Perhaps, however, it passed the test that really matters. My daughters, who had neither seen nor read it before, said that how Shakespeare is dressed or staged does not make too much difference. The play's the thing. And they went away discussing the essential ambiguity: how far to sympathise with and how far to criticise the behaviour and character of Coriolanus the man? That is another reason why *Coriolanus* will always haunt the memory.

My own conclusion is that the public school did not shape the English character. Something about the English character, expressed in *Coriolanus*, shaped the English public school.

Durham

Fuzzy white cords of snow intertwine, trailing
Down from humped cloud-mass across his eyes.
A low light jostles unsteadily through
Ripped rags of the West horizon—paling

Backdrop to regretted decision.
Feet, mind trudge on between barbed hedges,
Numb fields. Boughs hang soggy black, any green
Trace supplied more by memory than vision.

No real colour, then. No reds or pinks,
No holly-berry, flicker of robin-breast.
A fatigued yellow only, from the windows ahead.
But flakes feather about him. He huddles his senses. And thinks,

As he plods on to the place where he shouldn't go,
That after all the world could be worse. For at least
The spinning dark in the depths of the cumulus
Doesn't weave black snow.

Robert Conquest

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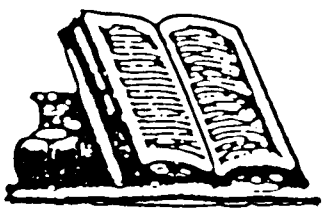
IN THE MARGIN

The Face at the Top of the Column

By Anthony Hartley



PICK UP any newspaper these days and ask yourself what is its favourite subject. Not foreign affairs; that interest, always tenuous, is shrinking still more at a moment when we are all increasingly influenced by the doings of our neighbours. Is it political reporting and analysis, witty, cogent and objective writing about Parliament and the doings of the parties? Well . . . no. More and more, what will strike the reader is the privileged place occupied by stories on "the media"—that is, about journalists and their impresarios. Palace revolutions, rows, and misdemeanours in press and broadcasting are followed with the anxious attention once given to Balkan politics or "the Irish Question".

Of course, it is natural that journalists should be interested in their own occupation. It is, indeed, particularly natural at the moment, when the great exchange and mart of news in Fleet Street has been shattered and its remnants dispersed from the Isle of Dogs to Kensington High Street. Since it is now far more difficult for those working on newspapers actually to meet their colleagues in the flesh, an obsessive interest in their doings at second hand is the next best thing.

Perhaps this is far-fetched, but some explanation is needed of the amount published about the media. For it cannot be that readers or viewers are intensely interested in the passions and aspirations unleashed by working for press or broadcasting. The news that Mr Joe Bloggs is to leave the foreign editorship of the *Daily X* or *Y* may signal to the initiate the result of an epic internal battle, but is unlikely to grip civil servants or business men setting out for the office. At best they will merely congratulate themselves on not working in so uncertain a trade, where the rites of passage from youth to age can only be comfortably performed by leaping from golden stepping-stone to golden stepping-stone. Such pieces of information must be intended for a charmed or intoxicated inner circle. One may doubt if their absence would worry the general public.

Journalists are romantics. Like everyone else they require a life-lie. The myth they generate about journalism has something in it of *Front Page*—green eyeshades and whisky—and, more recently, something of the "investigative" reporter (old-fashioned reporters did not "investigate"; they reported) rebuking sin in very high places indeed—"No, Mr President, I cannot cover up for you." These images are, of course, American. In its heyday, old-style heroic journalism in Britain ran more to journeys on fleet dromedaries to the nearest telegraph office to the Battle of Omdurman. But whatever the ideal image might be, whether transatlantic or home-produced, it served to reinforce a conviction that the occupation of journalism was vital and virtuous. Believing this, it is not surprising that journalists should choose to share with their readers their own and, above all, other people's ups-and-downs.

It is also the case that those ups-and-downs have been particularly strenuous of recent years. In the late 1970s it looked as though London was bound for the New York solution, with only two or three papers surviving the attentions of the print unions. Rupert Murdoch saved British journalism, though he is not often given credit for this. But the battle was not an easy one, and the siege of Wapping had all the cliff-hanging fascination of the siege of Lucknow. As time went on, others passed through the hole in the union entrenchments which Mr Murdoch had made; but so belated was this rescue, so extensive the upheavals attending it, that journalism itself became news. Indeed the conduct of newspapers, the rise and fall of those managing or editing them, is never without drama. Along with acting and the Secret Service, journalism is one of the dramatic professions—not without similarities to its fellows.

It was to be expected, therefore, that it should have embraced the star system. Personas are as carefully cultivated as a television personality's hair. The unsigned article is repugnant to a man with his career to make, and management easily concedes a by-line over however brief an utterance, if this can be negotiated in lieu of more pay. But claims for individual renown do not stop at names. The reader—lucky man!—also gets the writer's face at the top of the column. On television an endless succession of tense mouthing figures describe the political situation in Washington or Moscow in tones appropriate to an announcement of the Last Judgment.

IT CANNOT BE SAID that these appearances help either the aesthetic sensibility of the audience or the credibility of the journalist. But the evolution of reporters and leader-writers into "media-men", with "images" and fans all their own, increases the tendency to treat them as news in their own right. So they and their papers or networks and their owners and their managers are all legitimate subjects for news items, gossip, analysis, professional and financial, as well as targets for the occasional dig in the ribs with a stiletto when some colleague sees an opportunity. It used to be said of Fleet Street that dog did not eat dog, but now the devouring of canine competitors provides a good story. Mao Tse-tung once remarked that Communism was like dog-meat. The first time it made you sick, but later you came to like it. So with the reciprocal malice of journalists.

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But if "the media world" is news, what news is there about it? How is it doing? Of the financial activities involved—the buying and selling of newspapers, the seemingly endless discussions of satellite and cable networks of television—all one can say is that, as the great demographer André Siegfried once remarked about the Chinese, there seem to be a lot of them. This in itself may well be a sign of financial health—the bees buzzing fiercely around the hive. What is more to the point for the consumer is that there are more newspapers—some of them serious—and that there will shortly be much much more television, of a quality yet to be experienced.

"AH, BUT THE TABLOIDS!" someone will exclaim. What is the point of having more newspapers when many of those that sell best simply represent the cultural dereliction in which millions of Britain's population have been left? The serious press may be expanding; in the middle the *Mail* and the *Express* struggle, but survive; but beyond that there is a sort of cultural wasteland in which the so-called "sub-class" grazes its pasture of tawdry sensation and sexual titillation.

Culturally, the world of the tabloid reader is, indeed, depressing. But is it so very new? There have always been publications intended for the uneducated. The difference is that, whereas these used to operate within a context of values shared by most of the British working class, now they do not. The old *Daily Mirror* had a recognisable ethos—fair shares and a cup of tea all round—which had nothing to do with sexual liberation, the break-down of religious belief, and the erosion of authority for its own sake. The present content of the tabloids is the product of the moral confusion of the '60s, expressing itself in succeeding decades as the collapse of education and an anarchy of values.

Yet those who talk as though the press in the '80s simply represented the onset of barbarism ignore the other side of the story. More serious newspapers are being read. In particular there has been the appearance of *The Independent*—something of a portent in the world of British newspapers. For not only did this initiative, in an area where no one had considered that anything of the sort was possible, show that a new up-market newspaper could make its way, but the acceptance by *The Independent*'s readership of its implacably serious tone also demonstrated that in the puritanical '80s education has begun to create a new class of readers, concerned to inform themselves, hard-working and willing to digest even difficult facts when these are presented to them.

By other journalists *The Independent* has been criticised for being dull, for lacking the "in jokes" and the spark of gossipy malice which are usually considered essential ingredients of a good paper. Perhaps. But this is beside the point—possibly even sour grapes. On the whole, *The Independent* addresses its audience as though they were responsible and adult human beings. It may try to teach them something; it does not talk down to them. The achievement of its editor and founder, Andreas Whittam-Smith, has been to realise that many people are tired of being talked down to. The children of the Thatcher era want more sophisticated cars and computers. Why should they not also want more sophisticated newspapers? For them political direction is probably of little importance provided that it is not boringly predictable. What matters is the level of discourse.

THAT A GROWTH IN the demand for serious newspapers, of which *The Independent* is such a striking symbol, must be considered a product of the Thatcher era—indeed, of the Prime Minister's policies—is not an idea which is often expressed—certainly not by most *Independent* readers. Yet the conditions for that expansion—an enlarged middle class, the taming of the unions, the emphasis on new technology—would hardly have been present had those policies not existed. In the past one often felt that those who ran newspapers were underestimating their readers' intelligence. But the Gadarene progression downmarket in search of larger circulation may have been halted. For the serious press there are, at any rate, some sociological facts with which to argue against managerial "realism". And perhaps television networks should draw a similar lesson from a recent poll which showed how bored the public were with their productions. Nor are the viewers—thought to watch anything, provided it flickers—exactly falling over themselves to get access to the new offerings from satellite or cable. . . .

For newspapers the outlook, even in cultural terms, is slightly more hopeful than it was. Nevertheless, there are clouds on the horizon. In the not too distant future, journalists must expect to be faced with a "Right to Privacy" Bill. The behaviour of some newspapers has made this inevitable—perhaps the incident that put the lid on it was the stealing of Princess Anne's letters—and it had better be accepted without too much self-serving outcry or huffing-and-puffing about freedom of the press. Huffing-and-puffing is what people do when they have a weak case, and journalists would be wise to realise that, to the man in the street, their activities do not appear quite as much of an unmixed blessing as they themselves believe. Freedom of the press, like other forms of freedom, is not an absolute right and is only beneficial when it is used with a sense of responsibility and consideration for the rights of others. At the moment the media are going through one of their unpopular periods, and, since they have failed to restrain themselves, they are bound for restraints in law.

LEAVING ASIDE the gossip about personalities and profitability, the question that has to be asked about a newspaper is whether it succeeds in conveying to its readers, in an intelligent manner, what is happening in the world around them and in establishing a framework (no doubt different according to the political persuasion of the paper) by which events can be understood and judged. However, as well as this task of information, there is also

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bound to be a strong mixture of pure entertainment—far more on television than in newspapers. This continually threatens to distort and engulf information and analysis. When that process has gone too far, then newspapers are severed from their original purpose and can plead little to support their claim to be essential parts of the mechanism of an open and democratic society. One suspects that most television viewers would prefer to have more good films than all those current affairs programmes, recognising instinctively that here the medium itself acts as a distorting factor on information and comment.

Can those engaged in the production of news offer their audience a fair and objective coverage? Can they earn their money and keep their integrity? Prudence and modesty are the way, rather than a romantic taste for myth —however flattering. Their readers or viewers are likely to feel increasingly overwhelmed by the gifts offered them, satiated with swathes of Finnish forest on Sunday mornings, headachy from "special television investigations" during the week. Ennui is the ultimate enemy of the media.

For the present, most of us continue to plough through layers of newsprint or goggle with the best of them. But will this always be so? Perhaps we should go off and learn Sanskrit instead—advice once given by a very distinguished journalist. And it may be that the hidden resentment generated by this fatal attraction is one more reason why journalists offer their public so many stories about journalism, a desperate plea for understanding of their difficulties and moral dilemmas.

AUTHORS

Patricia Lesko studied at the University of Michigan before teaching in Italy. She later returned to the University to study fiction writing, and to take up a teaching position in the English Department. Since 1987 she has taught English at Madonna College in Michigan. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, mainly in the USA.

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His article is a version of a talk delivered in June 1988 in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., to a conference (organised by James Billington) on the subject of "Knowledge and Power".

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LETTERS

Art at the Tate

THE PURPOSE of my remarks ("The National Collections", ENCOUNTER, January 1989), about Nicholas Serota's policy, such as it is, at the Tate Gallery (see his letter in the May issue) was to suggest that it is wise to present a balanced picture of the artistic scene at any one time, rather than favour a few arbitrarily selected fashionable stars.

Historians of art have reminded us of the diversity of artistic achievement at any one time: it is only within the last 30 years that the Italian Baroque and the Pre-Raphaelites have returned to favour. Thus, to use an analogy that may appeal to modern trustees, a diversified portfolio is prudent.

My prejudice, if that is the right word, is that galleries such as the Tate should seek to combine representation of the experimental and the traditional, and to encourage a critical spirit in the audience, not least about the opinions of the pundits.

DENYS SUTTON

London

Who Profits from the Law?

AN ARTICLE which suggests that the Model Rules of Professional Conduct rationalise any moral problem with lawyer advertising ought to note that the practice has been protected on constitutional grounds by decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States (see "The Law and its Profits" by Jonathan Sinclair Carey, ENCOUNTER, March). An article which implies lawyer self-interest in advertising ought in fairness to acknowledge the fact that the vast majority of professional organisations in the United States opposed the decision granting the practice constitutional protection. When attempts were made to expand the constitutional protection to targeted mail solicitation, the Florida Academy of Trial Lawyers, the organisation of these lawyers specialising in prosecuting personal injury claims on a contingency fee basis, filed an amicus brief urging the Court not to do so. When the Court did declare the right of a lawyer to solicit specific cases by mail to be constitutionally protected, the American Trial Lawyers Association amended its membership rules to disqualify anyone who engaged in the practice.

An author who unabashedly dismisses what he terms bringing justice to the "masses" in discussing contingency fees and does not once address their relevance to furthering access to the administration of justice for those who do not qualify for legal aid or cannot afford the fees necessary to retain solicitors and barristers to pursue a claim gives new meaning to the concept of élitism.

I do not want to be understood to suggest for one moment that there are no problems with the proposal that England import the contingency fee. There are aspects of it which are as troubling, for instance, as the recent report in the *National Law Journal* that the average annual net income of each of the partners in two New York firms is one million dollars. Somehow, I have the feeling that we are unlikely to see an equally critical article by Mr Carey on that subject.

It may well be that as with so many other things the proper resolution lies somewhere between the extremes. Contingency fees should perhaps be subject to review and reduction by a master of the rolls it if is determined that the relevant circumstances demonstrate the fee is clearly excessive and the lawyer has made no voluntary adjustment, as many do. The concept might even be extended to the review of expert witness fees such as that paid (and apparently pocketed in full) by Mr Carey.

MICHAEL FRANCK

Executive Director
State Bar of Michigan

I AM GRATEFUL to Mr Franck for his brief explanation regarding the *(de jure)* constitutionality of lawyer advertising in the United States and the *(de facto)* professional monitoring of "the lawyer self-interest" by the American Trial Lawyers Association and the Florida Academy of Trial Lawyers. I have been told, just as a point of interest, that in the Florida Yellow Pages, which covers just one section of the state, there are 97 pages devoted to lawyers advertising—surpassed in length, interestingly enough, only by the physicians.

Mr Franck wants to accuse this moral philosopher of what he calls élitism. Yet the term as used here is unfair, at best, hardly appropriate. My philosophical concern, purely and simply stated, is with the priorities and goals of justice—period. Dare I be so forthright as to say the love of justice for the sake of justice itself? If that is élitism, then so be it. (Any true professional must also be convicted of the charge.) Certainly justice comes at a price, of that there is little question. The old adage, "Let justice be done though the heavens fall", was certainly proved true with the recent expenditure of some $60 million on the trial of Oliver North.

What may surprise Mr Franck, though, is that I have relatively little difficulty when he invokes the example of the New York lawyers earning an average of one million dollars each, as if this in itself raises a question. Quite frankly, I see this example as subterfuge, off the main issue of justice itself, for he says nothing about what type of law the firm practises. Different firms specialise in different aspects—with different compensation for services rendered. Again, my concern is only with the principles of justice and their motivations, especially pertaining to expert witnesses.

Surely Mr Franck has heard of expert witnesses who have generated great incomes from testifying, criss-crossing the states with their knowledge for hire. It reaches a point that one must begin to question their credibility, if not motivations. More than one attorney in court has asked the expert witness on the stand if he or she is being reimbursed and how often he or she has testified. The intention is not so much to demonstrate professional competence as to establish in the judge and jury's eyes that maybe, just maybe, the expert witness is indulging in a capitalist venture over service to justice itself.

I certainly agree that the monitoring of expert witness fees is in order, not that any proposals or suggestions will be made here as to how this should take place. No doubt we shall continue to disagree about the place of contingency fees in English law.

And just for the record, not that anything actually needs to be said to justify my "pocketed in full" expert witness fee, the amount of money received actually went to Oxford University *in toto*—to pay research fees so that my studies into moral philosophy and the law might continue. I hope Mr Franck agrees—at least in principle—that such money is well spent indeed.

JONATHAN SINCLAIR CAREY

London

Remembering Desmond Williams

MAY I ADD my own recollections to Patrick Cosgrave's memoir of Desmond Williams (ENCOUNTER, March 1989)? In 1950, when I was working as a freelance journalist in Dublin, somebody pointed out to me a passage in *The Leader*, a magazine which combined conventional Catholicism with a rather unconventional Nationalism, mainly directed to the furtherance of a more Irish Ireland which would be less under the thumb

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of the Unionist past and the gombeenman present. In it there was an article, unsigned, about the Irish Labour Party in Dublin, in which I was referred to as a "left-winger". In one sense this was true; I had written articles urging that more attention should be paid to the teachings of James Connolly, which by the very conservative standards of the party at the time was indeed inflammatory. But I had never thought of myself in that capacity; and curiosity prompted me to ask Val Iremonger (I am glad to see he features in the Larkin anthology of *Twentieth Century English Verse*; he will be remembered here by those who enjoyed his hospitality when he was the press officer at the Irish Embassy), who was knowledgeable about such matters, if he knew who had written the piece. Yes, he said: Desmond Williams. Would I like to meet him?

HAVING just finished a Ph.D. thesis in Trinity I knew about Desmond, Professor of Modern History in University College; but the barriers between the two institutions were formidable, in those days, and we had not met. When we were introduced, I was momentarily unimpressed. His gait was ungainly, the consequence of an accident playing rugger at school which had developed into osteomyelitis. Only one eye looked at me when he was talking, the other sidling off. He smoked incessantly, lighting the next cigarette from the one he was holding between his fingers, often not puffing at it until the ash dropped off on to the floor, or on to his suit. And he had a stammer.

Within minutes, though, I had fallen under his spell—not too strong a word, though there was nothing spooky about it. He simply had that capacity to make his company something not to be missed; and for the next three years until I left Ireland to work in London he and I and his closest friend Patrick Lynch met most Saturday evenings, if we were in Dublin, to have dinner at the Unicorn, and talk about whatever was going on.

STUPIDLY, I never went to any of the lectures that so inspired his students, as Patrick Cosgrave has recalled. But there was a sense in which even the most light-hearted conversation in which he was involved could be regarded as a seminar, as he indulged in a quiet, less irritating Socratic habit of putting in little probing questions which compelled anybody who had over-stretched or over-simplified an argument to reframe it, sometimes in the process being compelled to admit error, or at least exaggeration.

As a boy he had been a fervent admirer of Hitler, but if by the end of the War there had been anything left of his Nazism, a spell working for the British on the German Foreign Office papers banished it. Some obituarists have treated him as a Right-winger, and his close associates at Peterhouse certainly were, or became, ideologically on the right of the political spectrum. But that never obtruded, so far as I was concerned. His views appeared untinged by the kind of conservatism which Cosgrave, say, represents. And to this day, I have no idea what his religious beliefs were.

COSGRAVE recalls Desmond as "riotously" unpunctual. I know what he is driving at, but it is not quite the right term. There was something in Desmond equivalent to the Freudian concept of a death wish: a wish not to be wherever he was supposed to be, at any time. Frequently there was no question of unpunctuality; he just did not turn up. Sometimes this was because he had made two appointments for the same hour—or even more. Tim Pat Coogan, for many years editor of the *Irish Press*, has recalled an occasion when he arrived at the Stephens Green Club to have dinner with Desmond, and heard him on the telephone explaining to somebody else that he could not have dinner with him, after all, as he had just remembered an important previous engagement. Flattered, Tim Pat greeted him as he came out of the telephone booth, only to realise from the look on Desmond's face that the important engagement was not in fact, with Tim Pat.

Stories of this kind were, and still are, legion, and on one point they are agreed; Desmond did *not* duck an engagement because he had a more important one. On the contrary, it was often the important ones which were shirked. I was with him at the Stephens Green Club one evening when he refused to take calls from his wife—he was briefly married to a girl he had met in Germany—only to find that she wanted to remind him that he had invited the President of the University College and his wife to dinner, and they had arrived. Of course this could be infuriating; but it was impossible to be angry with Desmond for long.

My fondest memory of Desmond is of the remarkable attraction he had for women. When I came to work in London I would get together some friends to greet him on his visits and invariably he would soon have two or three of the most attractive women in the party sitting around his chair. He took them seriously, they explained; if they had anything of interest to talk about—their work, say—he would draw them out in a way which probably no other man of their acquaintance had ever bothered to do. After one occasion two of them, both well-known young actresses, rang me to say that he had invited them to lunch. I was intrigued to find that though he had invited them independently, he had given both of them the same time and place to meet him: the Ritz Bar, his favourite London haunt. Which, I wondered, would he expect to meet when he arrived? Unable to resist the temptation, I decided to be there, too. I should have known: Desmond did not appear, and I had to foot the bill for lunch.

BRIAN INGLIS

London

Ustinov's Music of Time

TAX REFORM in cultural matters has long been overdue, and one can only wish M. J. Lasky's three British Lords (Annan, Beloff, and Quinton) Godspeed in the effort to organise just penalties for the intellectual evasion and downright literary crookedness which the article "Towards a Negative Cultural Tax" (ENCOUNTER, April) amply documents.

Still, as in all tax matters, the experts out there always seem to be cleverer than our own responsible experts in cultural law-and-order in detecting loopholes and ways of getting around anything, even the iron-clad literal meanings as specified by artists like Shakespeare, Verdi, Wagner, *et al.*

I want to call your attention to a ploy which I spotted here on television last night; but since it is a mini-series of Peter Ustinov's mélange of scenes and reflections on Russian history which had international backing from many investors and producers in Europe and America, it will indicate to Lasky and the Lords what they will be up against.

It was all full of Slavic sentiment, "old holy Russia" and all that; and the *Umilenie* of Ustinov's ancestral memories could indeed touch one's heart. In any case, the treatment of Peter the Large, Catherine the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Napoleon the Loser, was optically interesting. But *the music*! I could not believe my ears. Every episode has a thunderous opening and closing with the *Internationale*. My ears echoed with the prisoners-of-starvation and the wretched-of-the-earth always arising, and "the final conflict", *la lutte finale*, fast closing in on us.

But what has this to do with all the pre-Lenin centuries of the past? And even in the 20th century the Communist anthem was only official for a brief time (until Stalin the Bloodthirsty ordered a more patriotic-traditional melody). A newspaper reporter here

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put the question the other day to one of the producers: "Why?" He replied that he didn't know either *(Die Welt,* 25 March 1989, p.7). An editor at the ZDF-Second Channel TV opined that it was, after all, for some fairly recent decades the actual National Anthem of the USSR . . . .

Whether this is a case of a sneaky bit of agit-prop smuggled in, or whether it betrays musicological irresponsibility, I think it should be classified as a serious misdemeanour in your "Negative Cultural Tax" scheme.

For this misdeed of musical displacement, or aural assault and battery, there should be an appropriate fine levied on the TV producers and, perhaps, on Peter Ustinov himself if he personally let the outrage go through. You might want to consider in what currency the punitive cultural tax should be imposed. Russia's *Internationale*—played in the backroom by the Bolsheviks in the band, with Pushkin and Tolstoy big on the screen—calls for the payment of roubles and kopecks. But how many? and at what exchange rate in the financial capitals of the world?

Your defence of culture is noble, but it is also a very tricky business.

VICTOR POLSCH

Bonn

Religion & Rationality

THE APRIL "Men & Ideas" by D. C. Stove ("The Oracles & Their Cessation") is totally fascinating; as enjoyable as anything I've read in ENCOUNTER—quite superb. As an explanation of the religious phenomenon in human history it is highly plausible. There is just one small point I would like to take issue with, and that occurs on page 35, where Professor Stove states:

> "Religious beliefs are not arrived at by any complex intellectual process, or by anything which would ordinarily be recognised as reasoning. (If religion did require reasoning, most people would never arrive at it at all.) Quite the contrary: religious beliefs spring up spontaneously, and with irresistible force, almost everywhere in the soil of humanity."

I would like to observe the following: humanity's "beliefs" about anything have a rational basis in every case, religious belief included. Spinoza said of God, "If God is not rational, He is nothing". The religious "belief" springs from the endeavour to explain, however badly ("irrationally" or "illogically"), the fact of experience that thought or consciousness, in a highly developed state, inheres in electrically-animated human cells for a period of years. This is a universal and inescapable experience that all human beings—especially when their attention is drawn to the facts of mortality and birth—give, willingly or unwillingly, some thought to (i.e. attempt to come to terms with or "rationalise"), at least to their own individual satisfaction. The more practically-minded the human being, the more inclined he or she is to avoid, willingly (or willfully?), the irreducible fact of the presence in the human body of an element in addition to flesh, blood and electricity, and so not to think about such a fact: hence the large numbers of atheists, agnostics and non-religious in the world. Such persons deliberately confine the rationalising of things experienced to a narrowed range of fact, that is all. But the greater part of humanity is more open and willing to engage with the basic fact of an apparently "immortal" element in itself and to *think* about it. Its codified speculations constitute the scriptures and rituals of the world's religions.

As for the point about, "If religion did require reasoning, most people would never arrive at it at all. . . ", it is true there is a reluctance on most people's part to put in hard thinking. But, as anyone will know who has served on a jury, when ordinary people have no choice but to apply their minds to a set of facts, they show commendable powers of reasoning. And when faced with the facts of birth and death, as with any other facts of human experience, the mind rationalises, or attempts to do so.

Obviously, there is much more to say on this point, but a letter is not the best place for it. But this writer cannot see that religious speculation is any less rationally-based than any other speculation.

WILLIAM OXLEY

Brixham
South Devon

MR OXLEY'S letter is admirably cautious (which makes his praise of my article the more pleasant to me). I agree with him that, on juries, ordinary people reason sensibly enough for the most part. The trouble is, that it is very much easier to reason well about a burglary or an assault, than about our minds, our bodies, and gods.

This is exemplified in Mr Oxley's letter itself. He refers to "the irreducible fact of the presence in the human body of an element in addition to flesh, blood . . .," etc. But *where* in the human body is this element present? "Inside the skull" is just as nonsensical an answer as "in the liver". There can be, *per accidens*, all sorts of things inside a human skull: bullets, bits of chewing-gum, etc. But typically there is (as everyone has known for thousands of years) only a lot of squashy stuff.

Could we, if we sieved that stuff sufficiently carefully, come across consciousness, or thoughts, or subjectivity? Mr Oxley's words imply that we could, and Descartes and a million others have implied the same. But to me this seems to be, not even factual, but a *logical* error: rather like thinking that, because mirror-images are "in" a mirror, you would only need to slice a mirror sufficiently thin to get a mirror-image without the mirror.

D. C. STOVE

Mulgoa
Australia

Out of Print

I COULDN'T agree more with Anthony Hartley ("Revolution & Romanticism", ENCOUNTER, March 1989) on the enjoyment of reading Chateaubriand's autobiography. Why is this great book unavailable in English? Years ago one could get it in the Penguin Classics, but they seem to have discontinued the title. I lent my own copy to a friend in a rash moment of enthusiasm, but he lost it (without reading it).

If not Penguin, another enterprising publisher should get it back on the bookstalls. *A propos*: I think I am right in saying that George Painter's biography is also out of print.

MARK LE FANU

London

Hook on "Skoblin"

THE OMISSION of a small but vital word from Sidney Hook's letter in the June issue of ENCOUNTER totally reversed his meaning. The first sentence of his final paragraph should have read:

> "What seems to be true is that Beneš had no more insight into the character of Stalin than Lenin, Trotsky, and all the Kremlinologists of the world."

We regret the unfortunate printing error.

THE EDITORS

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Life & Letters Today

New York City

THE REAL WAY TO HELP: *Mayor Ed Koch and NYC Schools Chancellor Richard Green are like tired, you know, of public school students who axe questions and don't know nuttin. And they want to do something about it.*

Koch yesterday outlined proposals to help the city's nearly one million students speak more precisely.

*Instead of practicing "the rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain", students will be asked to say, "Yes, you're right", instead of "**Yup, you betcha**", and "The books are in the library", not "**The books is in the liberry**."*

The proposals, developed by Green, include a list of 20 of the "most common speech demons". Among the "demons" are:

> *"**I ain't got none**" (correct: I don't have any), "**What youse want?**" (correct: What do you want), "**I was like tired, you know**" (correct: I was tired), "**So I says to him**" (correct: so I said to him), "**Pacifically**" (correct: specifically).*

Prof. John Mayher of the New York University English Education Department (and a consultant to city schools), said that use of the list could be "stigmatizing" to some students.

Many of the phrases, he said, are often used by blacks and Hispanics and are "not mistakes (for them) because it is part of their systematic way of talking. You don't have to change the way you speak to be able to read and write, that's the real way to help people get out of the ghetto."

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Budapest

RIGHT HAND MAN: **A museum here has paid £500 for the right hand of Stalin which was part of the huge Stalin monument toppled in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. It was sold by the widow of a rector who had it in his Budapest garden as a decoration.**

The Stalin statue, which was 18 metres high, was torn down during the night of 23 October 1956. The fragments were collected as souvenirs. The museum intends to show the right hand in an exhibition next year on the epoch of Hungarian Stalinism.

REUTER

Singapore

COLOUR SCHEME: *Full-page newspaper advertisements today formally announced that one of the most popular brands of toothpaste in Southeast Asia is changing its name from "Darkie" to "Darlie".*

After more than three years of pressure from blacks, religious groups, politicians and others, the Colgate-Palmolive Company decided that "Darkie" would have to go and that its distinctive logo would be redesigned.

For more than 60 years, the "Darkie" trademark was a grinning minstrel in blackface, wearing a top hat.

Colgate-Palmolive had said it would phase in the new name and a racially ambiguous face under the top hat. However, the advertisement today in "The Straits Times" carried the same blackface logo.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London

KOOL: **The choice of names of countries as "international words" suggested recently would have to take into account the spelling used by the foreign country concerned. Thus, the choice includes C for Canada, which to a German would indicate a K.**

This reminds me of an occasion in North Africa in 1943, when I heard a very senior irascible officer shouting on the radio: "K for Knife you fool! Can't you hear me?"

THE TIMES

Tallin/Tallinn

PURLOINED LETTER: *The tension between the two communities, one the old ethnic population and the other the new emigrants ("resettled" in a deliberate population policy), covers all things great and small. Of the 1.2 million inhabitants of Estonia soon the Soviet-Russian newcomers will constitute the majority, which they already are in some towns and cities.*

In the capital the Russians mostly live, not in the Estonian old town, but in a huge "satellite" settlement. It is still part of "Tallin", as they write it in their cyrillic script. Estonians insist that their city is spelled with a double-n. Resentment, hatred, nationalist revolt can be inflamed over a single letter in the alphabet.

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

Budapest

LOCAL CUSTOMS: **Hungary has liberalised the import of Western pornographic video cassettes, according to the official news agency MTI. It said a new regulation, which came into force last year, allows for the importation of "one porno video cassette per family." Jozsef Meszaros, a customs officer, said the customs office did not differentiate between "hard" and "soft" porno films "as long as they are declared and duty is paid on them."**

WASHINGTON POST

Washington, D.C.

EMANCIPATING LINCOLN: *The minute you get elected, you think you can rewrite Lincoln [writes William Safire].*

In his Second Annual Message to Congress, President Lincoln wrote: **"We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth."**

This was not some ad-lib taken down by a reporter, subject to error in transmission; this was a written message between branches of government, set in type, immutable, the way Lincoln wanted it.

One of Jimmy Carter's speechwriters, who knew the accurate wording, changed **of** *to* **on** *because he believed that* **of earth** *jarred, and most listeners would think the correct Lincoln version a misquotation. So the Carter version of the Lincoln quotation was "the last best hope* **on** *earth."*

Ronald Reagan evidently did not like the idea of the Earth doing the hoping. On innumerable occasions, he edited Lincoln's line to read "the last best hope **of man** *on earth."*

Along comes George Bush. On his election eve telecast, he called up the ghost of Lincoln and referred to America as "the last **great** *hope of man on earth."*

Lincoln's **best** *was not good enough; now the hope, with Reagan's* **of man** *added, has been elevated to* **great**.

NEW YORK TIMES

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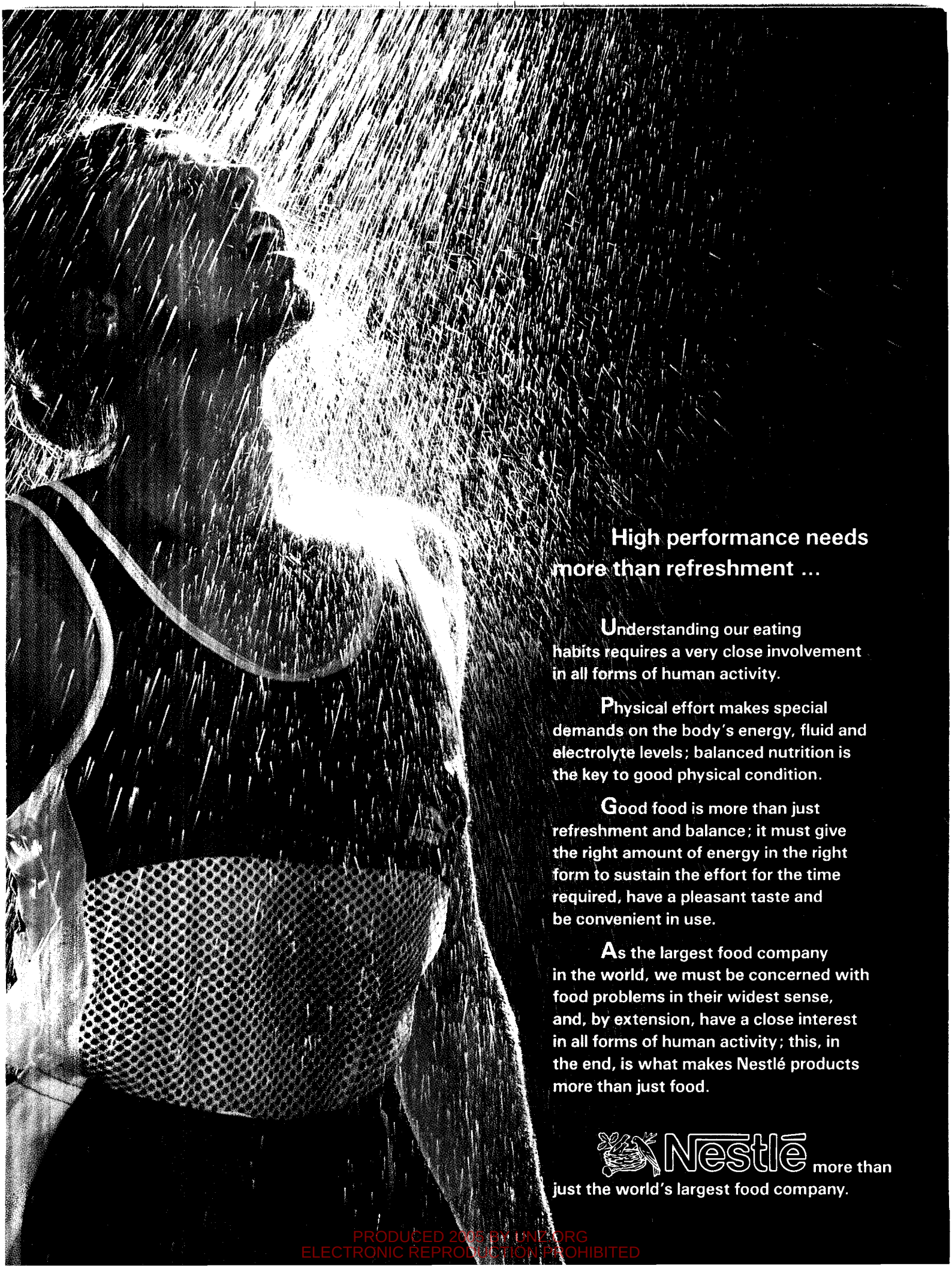

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PORTRAITS OF CULTURE

The Python Killer

Stories of Nzema Life
VINIGI L. GROTTANELLI

These African tales vividly portray the Nzema of south Ghana. Their exotic world of coconut groves, palm wine, and poisonous snakes is inhabited by a people who believe in sinister witches, oracles, jealous gods, and angry ghosts to whom they offer "sheep, some rice, eggs, and drinks, including two bottles of Coca-Cola." The only anthropologist to have lived among the Nzema, Grottanelli introduces their beliefs and traditions but lets them narrate their own vibrant and often mystical stories. Illus.

Oglala Women

Myth, Ritual, and Reality
MARLA N. POWERS
Foreword by Catharine R. Stimpson

This rich ethnographic portrait, based on oral histories collected on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, captures the complete context of Oglala life and the true position of women therein. "It is a happy event when a fine scholarly work is rendered accessible to the general reader, especially so when none of the complexity of the subject matter is sacrificed. *Oglala Women* is a long overdue revisionary ethnography of Native American culture."—Penny Skillman, *San Francisco Chronicle*
Illus.
Women in Culture and Society series

The Poison in the Gift

Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village
GLORIA GOODWIN RAHEJA

This detailed account of the linguistic and ritual aspects of giving and receiving in a North Indian village introduces the concept of *ritual centrality* and presents a powerful new interpretation of caste. "Raheja's study is major; its impact on South Asian anthropology and Indology in general is destined to be definitive and substantial. In some cases, her findings are bound to have the effect of kicking that keystone that has prevented a long-overdue avalanche. The landscape will be different."
—E. Valentine Daniel, University of Washington
Illus.

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The Dynamics of Polyandry

Kinship, Domesticity, and Population on the Tibetan Border
NANCY E. LEVINE

Among the Nyimba, an ethnically Tibetan group living in Nepal, a rare form of marriage is practiced in which one woman is married to several brothers. Using her years of fieldwork in the area, Levine presents a detailed analysis of this complex social system. "The extraordinary richness of Levine's description of the workings of polyandrous households, the detailed data on inheritance, partition, and assignment of paternity, and the analysis of how polyandry is affected by demography, ecology, and cultural factors make this book a key resource."—Robert Boyd, coauthor of *Culture and the Evolutionary Process* Illus.

Unnatural Emotions

Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory
CATHERINE A. LUTZ

From her observations of the daily joys and sorrows of the people of a small Pacific island, Lutz deduces that emotions are cultural artifacts whose meanings are learned. She argues that the Western concept of emotions—as irrational, natural, subjective, and essentially feminine—is not universal, and she suggests some of the social conditions that have helped that view emerge. Illus.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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